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RES JUDICATÆ

PAPERS AND ESSAYS

BY

AUGUSTINE BIRRELL

AUTHOR OF 'OBITER DICTA,' ETC.

'It need hardly be added that such sentences do not any more than the records of the superior courts conclude as to matters which may or may not have been controverted.' — *See* BLACKHAM'S *Case I. Salkeld 290*

NEW YORK

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1892

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PREFACE

THE first two essays in this volume were composed as lectures, and are now printed for the first time; the others have endured that indignity before. The papers on 'The Letters of Charles Lamb' and 'Authors in Court' originally appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine;* and the short essays entitled 'William Cowper' and 'George Borrow' in the *Reflector*, a lively sheet which owed its existence to and derived its inspiration from the energy and genius of the late Mr. J. K. Stephen, whose too early death has not only eclipsed the gaiety of many gatherings, but has robbed the country of the service of a noble and truth-loving man.

The other papers appeared either in *Scribner's Magazine* or in the columns of the *Speaker* newspaper.

Although, by the kindness of my present publishers, I have always been practically a 'protected article' in the States, I cannot help expressing my pleasure in finding myself in the enjoyment of the same modest rights as an author in the new home of my people as in the old.

A. B.

LINCOLN'S INN, LONDON.

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SAMUEL RICHARDSON

A LECTURE

It is difficult to describe mankind either in a book or in a breath, and none but the most determined of philosophers or the most desperate of cynics have attempted to do so, either in one way or the other. Neither the philosophers nor the cynics can be said to have succeeded. The descriptions of the former are not recognisable and therefore as descriptions at all events, whatever may be their other merits, must be pronounced failures; whilst those of the cynics describe something which bears to ordinary human nature only the same sort of resemblance that chemically polluted waters bear to the stream as it flows higher up than the source of contamination, which in this case is the cynic himself.

But though it is hard to describe mankind, it is easy to distinguish between peo-

ple. You may do this in a great many different ways : for example, and to approach my subject, there are those who can read Richardson's novels, and those who cannot. The inevitable third-class passenger, no doubt, presents himself and clamours for a ticket : I mean the man or woman who has never tried. But even a lecturer should have courage, and I say boldly that I provide no accommodation for that person to-night. If he feels aggrieved, let him seek his remedy — elsewhere.

Mr. Samuel Richardson, of Salisbury Court, Fleet Street, printer, was, if you have only an eye for the outside, a humdrum person enough. Witlings, writing about him in the magazines, have often, out of consideration for their pretty little styles, and in order to avoid the too frequent repetition of his highly respectable if unromantic name, found it convenient to dub him the 'little printer.'

He undoubtedly was short of stature, and in later life, obese in figure, but had he stood seven feet high in his stockings, these people would never have called him the 'big

printer.' Richardson has always been exposed to a strong under-current of ridicule. I have known people to smile at the mention of his name, as if he were a sort of man-milliner — or, did the thing exist, as some day it may do, a male nursery-governess. It is at first difficult to account for this strange colouring of the bubble reputation. Richardson's life, admirable as is Mrs. Barbauld's sketch, cannot be said to have been written — his letters, those I mean, he wrote in his own name, not the nineteen volumes he made his characters write, have not been reprinted for more than eighty years. He of all men might be suffered to live only in his works, and when we turn to those works, what do we find? *Pamela* and *Clarissa* are both terribly realistic; they contain passages of horror, and are in parts profoundly pathetic, whilst *Clarissa* is desperately courageous. Fielding, with all his swagger and bounce, gold lace and strong language, has no more of the boldness than he has of the sublimity of the historian of Clarissa Harlowe. But these qualities avail poor Richardson nothing. The taint of afternoon tea still clings to him. The facts

— the harmless, nay, I will say the attractive, facts — that he preferred the society of ladies to that of his own sex, and liked to be surrounded by these, surely not strange creatures, in his gardens and grottos, first at North End, Hammersmith, and afterwards at Parsons Green, are still remembered against him. Life is indeed full of pitfalls, if estimates of a man's genius are to be formed by the garden-parties he gave, and the tea he consumed a century and a quarter ago. The real truth I believe to be this: we are annoyed with Richardson because he violates a tradition. The proper place for an eighteenth-century novelist was either the pot or the sponging house. He ought to be either disguised in liquor or confined for debt. Richardson was never the one or the other. Let us see how this works: take Dr. Johnson; we all know how to describe him. He is our great moralist, the sturdy, the severe, the pious, the man who, as Carlyle puts it in his striking way, worshipped at St. Clement Danes in the era of Voltaire, or, as he again puts it, was our real primate, the true spiritual edifier and soul's teacher of all England?

Well, here is one of his reminiscences: 'I 'remember writing to Richardson from a 'sponging-house and was so sure of my de- 'liverance through his kindness and liberal- 'ity, that before his reply was brought I 'knew I could afford to joke with the ras- 'cal who had me in custody, and did so over 'a pint of adulterated wine for which at that 'moment I had no money to pay.'

Now, there we have the true, warm-hearted, literary tradition of the eighteenth century. It is very amusing, it is full of good feeling and fellowship, but the morality of the transaction from the great moralist's point of view is surely, like his linen, a trifle dingy. The soul's teacher of all England, laid by the heels in a sponging-house, and cracking jokes with a sheriff's officer over a pint of wine on the chance of another man paying for it, is a situation which calls for explanation. It is not my place to give it. It could, I think, easily be given. Dr. Johnson was, in my judgment, all Carlyle declared him to be, and to have been called upon to set him free was to be proudly privileged, and, after all, why make such a fuss about trifles? The

debt and costs together only amounted to £5 18s., so that the six guineas Richardson promptly sent more than sufficed to get our 'real primate' out of prison, and to pay for the pint. All I feel concerned to say here is, that the praise of this anecdote belongs to the little printer, and not to the great lexicographer. The hero of the parable of the Good Samaritan is the Good Samaritan himself, and not the unfortunate, and therefore probably foolish, traveller who must need fall amongst thieves.

But if you violate traditions, and disturb people's notions as to what it is becoming for you to be, to do, or to suffer, you have to pay for it. An eighteenth-century novelist who made a fortune first by honest labour and the practice of frugality, and wrote his novels afterwards; who was fond of the society of ladies, and a vegetarian in later life; who divided his time between his shop and his villa, and became in due course master of a city company, is not what we have a right to expect, and makes a figure which strongly contrasts with that of Richardson's great contemporary, the

entirely manly Henry Fielding, whose very name rings in the true tradition; whilst as for his books, to take up *Tom Jones* is like re-entering in middle life your old college rooms, where, so at least Mr. Lowell assures us,

> 'You feel o'er you stealing
> The old, familiar, warm, champagny, brandy-punchy feeling.'

It may safely be said of Richardson that, after attaining to independence, he did more good every week of his life — for he was a wise and most charitable man — than Fielding was ever able to do throughout the whole of his; but this cannot alter the case or excuse a violated tradition.

The position, therefore, of Richardson in our literature is that of a great Nonconformist. He was not manufactured according to any established process. If I may employ a metaphor borrowed from his own most honourable craft, he was set up in a new kind of type. He was born in 1689 in a Derbyshire village, the name of which, for some undiscovered reason, he would never tell. The son of poor parents — his father was a joiner — he had never

any but a village school education, nor did he in later life worry much about learning, or seek, as so many printers have done, to acquire foreign tongues. At fourteen years of age he was bound apprentice to a printer in Aldersgate Street, and for seven years toiled after a fashion which would certainly nowadays be forbidden by Act of Parliament, were there the least likelihood of anybody either demanding or performing drudgery so severe. When out of his apprenticeship, he worked for eight years as a compositor, reader, and overseer, and then, marrying his late master's daughter, set up for himself, and slowly but steadily grew prosperous and respected. His first wife dying, he married again, the daughter of a bookseller of Bath. At the age of fifty he published his first novel, *Pamela*. John Bunyan's life was not more unlike an Archbishop of Canterbury's than was Richardson's unlike the life of an ordinary English novelist of his period.

This simile to Nonconformity also holds good a little when we seek to ascertain the ambit of Richardson's popularity. To do this we must take wide views. We must

not confine our attention to what may be called the high and dry school of literary orthodoxy. There, no doubt, Richardson has his admirers, just as Spurgeon's sermons have been seen peeping out from under a heap of archidiaconal, and even episcopal Charges, although the seat of Spurgeon's popularity is not in bishops' palaces, but in shop parlours. I do not mean by this that Richardson is now a popular novelist, for the fact, I suppose, is otherwise; but I mean that to take the measure of his popularity, you must look over the wide world and not merely at the clans and the cliques, the noble army of writers, and the ever lessening body of readers who together constitute what are called literary circles. Of Richardson's great fame on the Continent, it will be time enough to speak in a few minutes; for the moment I will stop at home. Mr. Leslie Stephen, who has been called to be editor of our first really great Dictionary of National Biography, and has in that capacity to sit like a coroner's jury upon every dead author, and to decide whether his exploits are to be squeezed into one

miserable paragraph, or may be allowed proudly to expand over a page — he, I say, pronounces *Pamela* to be neither moral nor amusing. Poor Pamela, who through two mortal volumes thinks of nothing but her virtue, and how to get married according to law! to be thus dismissed by her most recent, most distinguished editor! But, I repeat, we must take wide views. We must not be content with the verdict of the university; we must seek that of the kitchen: nor is the distance ever great between these institutions. Two months ago a cook in a family of my acquaintance, one Saturday evening, when like old Caspar 'her work was done,' suddenly bethought herself of *Pamela*, a book she had not read since girlhood. Rest was impossible — get it forthwith she must. The housemaid proffered her *The Heir of Redclyffe*, and the kitchen-maid, a somewhat oppressed damsel, timidly produced *Gates Ajar*. The cook was not to be trifled with after any such feeble fashion. The spell of *Pamela* was upon her, and out she sallied, arrayed in her majesty, to gratify her soul's desire. Had she been a

victim of what is called 'Higher Education of Women,' and therefore in the habit of frequenting orthodox bookshops, she would doubtless have found the quest at so late an hour as hopeless as that of the *Holy Grail;* but she was not that sort of person, and the shop she had in her mind, and whither she straightway bent her steps, was a small stationer's where are vended *Family Heralds* and *Ballads* and *Pamelas;* for the latter, in cheap sixpenny guise — and I hope complete, but for this I cannot vouch — is a book which is constantly reprinted for sale amongst the poor. The cook, having secured her prize, returned to her home in triumph, where a dinner worthy of the name was not to be had until Pamela's virtue was rewarded, which, as you doubtless remember, it only was when her master brings her a license and presses for a day. She desires it may be on a Thursday, and gives her reasons. He rallies her agreeably on that head. The Thursday following is fixed upon. She reflects seriously on the near prospect of her important change of condition, and is diffident of her own worthiness, and

prays for humility that her new condition may not be a snare to her, and makes up her mind how to behave herself to the servants, she herself having been one.

There are well-authenticated instances of the extraordinary power *Pamela* possesses of affecting those who are not much in the habit of reading. There is a story of its being read aloud by a blacksmith round his anvil night after night, to a band of eager rustics, all dreadfully anxious good Mr. Richardson would only move on a little faster, and yet unwilling to miss a single one of poor Pamela's misadventures; and of their greeting by hearty rounds of British cheers, the happy issue out of her afflictions that awaits her, namely, her marriage with the cause of every one of them.

There are living writers who have written some admirable novels, and I have known people to be glad when they were finished, but never to the pitch of three times three.

I am not, of course, recommending anyone to read *Pamela;* to do so would be an impertinence. You have all done so, or tried to do so. 'I do not remember,' says

'Charles Lamb, 'a more whimsical surprise 'than having been once detected by a famil- 'iar damsel, reclining at my ease upon the 'grass on Primrose Hill, reading *Pamela*. 'There was nothing in the book to make a 'man seriously ashamed at the exposure; 'but as she seated herself down by me, and 'seemed determined to read in company, I 'could have wished it had been—any other 'book. We read on very socially for a few 'pages; and not finding the author much 'to her taste, she got up and went away. 'Gentle casuist, I leave it to thee to con- 'jecture whether the blush (for there was 'one between us) was the property of the 'nymph or the swain in the dilemma. From 'me you shall never learn the secret.'[1]

Miss Pamela Andrews was, to tell the truth, a vulgar young person. There is nothing heroic or romantic about her; she has not a touch or a trace of the moral sublimity of Jeannie Deans, who though of the same rank of life, belonged to another country and had had an entirely different up-bringing. What a reply was that of Jeannie's to the Rev. Mr. Staunton, George

[1] *Last Essays of Elia*, 52.

Robertson's father, when he, entirely misapprehending the purport of her famous journey, lets her perceive that he fancies she is plotting for her own marriage with his son. Says the father to the son: 'Perhaps you intend to fill up the cup of disobedience and profligacy by forming a low and disgraceful marriage; but let me bid you beware.' 'If you were feared for sic a thing happening with me, sir,' said Jeannie, 'I can only say that not for all the land that lies between the twa ends of the rainbow, wad I be the woman that should wed your son.' 'There is something very singular in all this,' said the elder Staunton; and so Pamela would have thought. She, honest girl that she was, was always ready to marry anybody's son, only she must have the marriage lines to keep in her desk and show to her dear parents.

The book's origin ought not to be overlooked. Some London booksellers, knowing Mr. Richardson to be a grave man of decorous life, and with a talent for moralising, desired him to write a series of familiar letter on the behaviour of young women

going out to service for the first time; they never intended a novel: they wanted a manual of conduct — that conduct which, according to a precise Arithmetician is three-fourths, or some other fraction, of human life. It was in this spirit that Richardson sat down to write *Pamela* and make himself famous. He had a facile pen, and the book, as it grew under his hand, outstripped its design, but never lost sight of it. It was intended for Pamelas, and is *bourgeois* to the very last degree. The language is simple, but its simplicity is not the noble, soul-stirring simplicity of Bunyan, nor is it the manly simplicity of Cobbett or Hugh Miller: it is the ignoble, and at times almost the odious, simplicity of a merely uncultured life. It abounds in vulgar phrases and vulgar thoughts; still, it reflects powerfully the scenes it portrays, and you feel as you read a fine affinity between the communicating medium, the language, and the thing communicated, the story. When people said, in the flush of their first enthusiasm, as they did say, that there were but two good books in the world, the *Bible*, and *Pamela*, this is what, perhaps

unconsciously they were thinking of; otherwise they were talking nonsense. Pamela spoke a language still understood of many, and if she was not romantic or high-flown, there are others like her. We are always well pleased, and it is perhaps lucky for the majority of novelists that it should be so, to read about people who do not in the least resemble us; still, anyone who describes us as we are, 'strikes the electric chain wherewith we are darkly bound,' and makes humanity quiver right down the centuries. Pamela was a vulgar little thing, and saucy withal: her notions of honour and dishonour were neither lofty nor profound; but she had them and stuck to them in perilous paths along which the defenceless of her sex are too often called to tread; and when finally her virtue is rewarded, and she is driven off in a chariot drawn by the four long-tailed mares upon whom she had been cruelly twitted for setting her affections, I for one am quite prepared to join with the rustics round the blacksmith's anvil in loud cheers for Pamela.

Ten years after *Pamela* came *Clarissa*. It is not too much to say that not only

Great Britain and Ireland, (the latter country not yet deprived of her liberties by the Act of Union, and therefore in a position to pirate popular authors, after the agreeable fashion of our American cousins,[1]) but also France, Germany, and Holland, simply gulped *Clarissa* down; and she was in seven volumes. It was a kind of gospel, something good and something new. Its author was a stout tradesman of sixty, but he was not in the very least degree what is now called — perhaps to the point of nausea — a Philistine. By a Philistine I suppose we must understand someone who lives and moves and has his being in the realm of ordinary stock conventional ideas — a man who is as blind to the future as he is deaf to the past. For example, that Dr. Drummond, Archbishop of York, who just about this very time told the Rev. Mr. Conyers, one of his clergy, 'that he would be better em-'ployed preaching the morality of Socrates 'than canting about the New Birth,' was a Philistine — I doubt not a very amiable one, but, being a Philistine, he had no chance of recognising what this nascent methodism

[1] Since abandoned, *Laus Deo!*

was, and as for dreaming what it might become — had he been capable of this — he would not have been a Philistine or, probably, Archbishop of York!

Richardson on the other hand had his quiver full of new ideas; he had his face to the east; he was no mere inheritor, he was a progenitor. He is, in short, as has been often said, our Rousseau; his characters were not stock characters. Think of Fielding's characters, his Tom Joneses and Booths, his Amelias and Sophias. They are stage properties as old as the Plantagenets. They are quite unidea'd, if I may use a word which, as applied to girls, has the authority of Dr. Johnson. Fielding's men are either good fellows with large appetites, which they gratify openly, or sneaks with equally large appetites, which they gratify on the sly; whilst the characters of his women are made to hinge solely upon their willingness or unwillingness to turn a blind eye. If they are ready to do this, they are angels; Sophia comes upon the stage in a chapter headed 'A short hint of what we can do in 'the sublime, and a description of Miss 'Sophia Western.' Poor neglected Amelia,

whenever she is forgiving her husband, is described as 'all one blaze of beauty;' but if they are not willing to play this *rôle*, why then they are unsexed and held up to the ridicule and reprobation of all good fellows and pretty women. This sort of thing was abhorrent to the soul of the little printer; he hated Fielding's boisterous drunkards with an entire hatred. I believe he would have hated them almost as much if Fielding had not been a rival of his fame. He said he was not able to read any more than the first volume of *Amelia*, and as for *Tom Jones*, in the year 1750, he was audacious enough to say that its run was over. Regarded merely as writers, there can, I suppose, be no real rivalry between Fielding and Richardson. The superiority of Fielding is apparent on every page. Wit, good-humour, a superb lusty style which carries you along like a pair of horses over a level moorland road, incidents, adventures, inns, and all the glory of motion, high spirits, huge appetites, pretty women — what a catalogue it makes of things no doubt smacking of this world and the kingdom thereof, but none the less

delightful on that account! No wonder *Tom Jones* is still running; where, I should like to know, is the man bold enough to stop him. But for all this, Richardson was the more remarkable and really interesting man of the two; and for the reason that he was the evangel of the new sentimentalism, that word which so puzzled one of his most charming correspondents that she wrote to ask him what it meant — this new word sentimental which was just beginning to be in everybody's mouth. We have heard a good deal of it since.

Clarissa Harlowe has a place not merely amongst English novels, but amongst English women.

It was a new thing for a woman to be described as being not only in herself but by herself commendable and altogether lovely, as triumphing in her own right over the cruelest dishonour, and rejecting, with a noble scorn new to literature, the hand in marriage of the villain who had done her wrong. The book opened the flood-gates of human tears. The waters covered the earth. We cannot weep as they used to do in 'the brave days of old.'

Listen to the wife of a Lancashire baronet: 'I verily believe I have shed a 'pint of tears, my heart is still bursting 'though they cease not to flow at this 'moment, nor will I fear for some time. '. . . Had you seen me I surely should 'have moved your pity. When alone in 'agonies would I lay down the book, take 'it up again, walk about the room, let fall 'a flood of tears, wipe my eyes, read again, 'perhaps not three lines, throw away the 'book, crying out: "Excuse me, good Mr. '"Richardson, I cannot go on, it is your '"fault, you have done more than I can '"bear;" threw myself upon my couch 'to compose; again I read, again I acted 'the same part, sometimes agreeably inter- 'rupted by my dear man, who was at that 'time labouring through the sixth volume 'with a heart capable of impressions equal 'to my own — tho' the effects shown in a 'more justifiable manner — which I believe 'may be compared to what Mr. Belfort felt 'when he found the beauteous sufferer in 'her prison-room. Something rose in my 'throat, I knew not what, which made me 'guggle as it were for speech.'

Nor did the men escape; a most grave and learned man writes:

'That *Pamela* and *Clarissa* have again '"obtained the *honour* of my perusal," &c 'you say, my dear Mr. Richardson. I as- 'sure you I think it an *honour* to be able 'to say I have read, and as long as I have 'eyes will read, all your three most excel- 'lent *pieces* at least once a year, that I am 'capable of doing it with increasing pleas- 'ure which is perpetually doubled by the 'reflection, that this good man, this charm- 'ing author, is *my friend*. I have been this 'day weeping over the seventh volume of '*Clarissa* as if I had attended her dying 'bed and assisted at her funeral proces- 'sion. Oh may my latter end be like 'hers!'

It is no wonder the author of *Clarissa* had soon a great correspondence with ladies, married and single, young and old, virtuous and the reverse. Had he not written seven volumes, all about a girl? had he not made her beautiful, wise and witty and learned withal? had he not depicted with extraordinary skill the character of the fascinating —the hitherto resistless Lovelace, who,

though accomplishing Clarissa's ruin does thereby but establish her triumph and confound himself? It is no doubt unhappily the case that far too many of Richardson's fair correspondents lacked the splendid courage of their master, and to his infinite annoyance fell in love with his arch-scamp, and prayed his creator that Lovelace might first be led to see the error of his ways, and then to the altar with the divine Clarissa. But the heroic printer was adamant to their cries, and he was right if ever man was. As well might *King Lear* end happily as *Clarissa Harlowe*.

The seven volumes caused immense talk and discussion, and it was all Clarissa, Clarissa, Clarissa. Sophia Western was, as we have seen, a comely girl enough, but she was as much like Clarissa as a ship in dock is like a ship at sea and on fire. What can you find to say of her or to her?[1] When you have dug Tom Jones in

[1] Richardson in a letter says this of her, 'the weak, 'the insipid, the runaway, the inn-frequenting Sophia;' and calls her lover 'her illegitimate Tom.' But nobody else need say this of Sophia, and as for Tom he was declared to be a foundling from the first.

the ribs, and called him a lucky dog, and wished her happy, you turn away with a yawn; but Clarissa is immense. Do you remember Thackeray's account in the *Roundabout Papers* of Macaulay's rhapsody in the Athenæum Club. 'I spoke to 'him once about *Clarissa*. "Not read *Clar-* '"*issa?*" he cried out. "If you have once '"thoroughly entered on *Clarissa* and are '"infected by it, you can't leave off. When '"I was in India I passed one hot season '"at the hills, and there were the governor- '"general, the secretary of government, '"the commander-in-chief and their wives. '"I had *Clarissa* with me, and as soon as '"they began to read the whole station '"was in a passion of excitement about '"Miss Harlowe and her misfortunes, and '"her scoundrelly Lovelace. The gov- '"ernor's wife seized the book, and the '"secretary waited for it, and the chief '"justice could not read it for tears." He 'acted the whole scene, he paced up and 'down the Athenæum Library. I dare 'say he could have spoken pages of the 'book, of that book, and of what countless 'piles of others.'

I must be permitted to observe that lawyers have been great Richardsonians. The Rev. Mr. Loftus, writing to our author from Ireland, says: 'I will tell you a story 'about your sweet girl Pamela. Our late 'lord chancellor,[1] who was a man more 'remarkable for the goodness of his heart 'than even for the abilities of his head, 'which were of the most exalted kind, was 'so struck with her history that he sat up 'reading it the whole night, although it 'was then the middle of term, and declared 'to his family he could not find it in his 'heart to quit his book, nor imagined it to 'be so late by many hours.'

The eminent Sergeant Hill, though averse to literature, used to set Clarissa's will before his pupils, and bid them determine how many of its uses and trusts could be supported in court. I am sorry to have to add that in the learned sergeant's opinion, poor Clarissa, in addition to all her other misfortunes, died intestate.

All this commotion and excitement and Clarissa-worship meant that something was brewing, and that good Mr. Richardson,

[1] Jocelyn, founder of the Roden peerage.

with his fat, round face flushed with the fire, had his ladle in the pan and was busy stirring it about. What is called the correspondence of Samuel Richardson, which was edited by that admirable woman, Mrs. Barbauld, and published in six volumes in 1804, is mostly made up, not of letters from, but to, the author of *Clarissa*. All the more effectually on that account does it let us into the manufactory of his mind. The letters a man receives are perhaps more significant of his real character than those he writes. People did not write to Mr. Richardson about themselves or about their business, or about literature, unless it were to say they did not like *Tom Jones*, or about politics, or other sports, but they wrote to him about himself and his ideas, his good woman, Clarissa, his good man, Sir Charles, and the true relation between the sexes. They are immense fun, these letters, but they ought also to be taken seriously; Mr. Richardson took them as seriously as he always took himself. There was, perhaps, only one subject Richardson regarded as of equal importance with himself, and that

was the position of woman. This is why he hated Fielding, the triumphant, orthodox Fielding, to whom man was a rollicking sinner, and woman a loving slave. He pondered on this subject, until the anger within him imparts to his style a virility and piquancy not usually belonging to it. The satire in the following extract from a letter he wrote to the good lady who shed a pint of tears over *Clarissa*, is pungent: 'Man is an animal that must bustle in the 'world, go abroad, converse, fight battles, 'encounter other dangers of seas, winds, 'and I know not what, in order to protect, 'provide for, maintain in ease and plenty, 'women. Bravery, anger, fierceness are 'made familiar to them. They buffet and 'are buffeted by the world; are impatient 'and uncontrollable; they talk of honour, 'run their heads against stone walls to 'make good their pretensions to it, and 'often quarrel with one another and fight 'duels upon any other silly thing that 'happens to raise their choler — their 'shadows if you please; while women are 'meek, passive, good creatures, who used 'to stay at home, set their maids at work,

'and formerly themselves, get their houses
'in order to receive, comfort, oblige, give
'joy to their fierce, fighting, bustling,
'active protectors, providers, maintainers,
'divert him with pretty pug's tricks, tell
'him soft tales of love, and of who and
'who's together, what has been done in
'his absence, bring to him little master,
'so like his own dear papa, and little pretty
'miss, a soft, sweet, smiling soul, with her
'sampler in her hand, so like what her
'meek mamma was at her years.'

You cannot, indeed, lay hold of many specific things which Richardson advocated. Ignorant of the classics himself, he was by no means disposed to advocate the teaching of them to women. Clarissa, indeed, knew Latin, but Harriet Byron did not. The second Mrs. Richardson was just a little bit too much for her husband, and he was consequently led to hold what may be called 'high doctrine' as to the duty of wives obeying their husbands. Though never was man less of a revolutionary than Richardson, still he was on the side of the revolution. He had an ethical system different from that which

stood beside him. This did not escape the notice of a keen-witted contemporary, the great Smollett, whose own Roderick Randoms and Peregrine Pickles are such unmitigated, high-coloured ruffians as to induce Sir Walter Scott to call him the Rubens of fiction, but who none the less had an eye for the future; he in his history speaks in terms of high admiration of the sublime code of ethics of the author of *Clarissa*. Richardson was fierce against duelling, and also against corporal punishment. He had the courage to deplore the evil effects produced by the works of Homer, 'that fierce, fighting *Iliad*,' as he called it. We may be sure his children were never allowed to play with tin soldiers, at least, not with their father's consent.

Having written *Clarissa* it became inevitable that Richardson should proceed further and write *Grandison*. In reading his correspondence we hail Sir Charles afar off. Richardson had deeply grieved to see how many of his ladies had fallen in love with the scoundrelly Lovelace. It wounded him to the quick, for he could not but feel that he was not in the least like

Lovelace himself. He turns almost savagely upon some of his fair correspondents and upbraids them, telling them indeed plainly that he feared they were no better than they should be. They had but one answer: 'Ah, dear Mr. Richardson, in '*Clarissa* you have shown us the good 'woman we all would be. Now show us 'the good man we all should love.' And he set about doing so seriously, aye and humbly, too. He writes with a sad sincerity a hundred years cannot hide:

'How shall a man obscurely situated, 'never in his life delighting in public en-'tertainments, nor in his youth able to fre-'quent them from narrowness of fortune; 'one of the most attentive of men to the 'calls of business — his situation for many 'years producing little but prospects of a 'numerous family — a business that seldom 'called him abroad when he might in the 'course of it see and know a little of the 'world, as some employments give oppor-'tunities to do — naturally shy and sheep-'ish, and wanting more encouragement by 'smiles to draw him out than anybody 'thought it worth their while to give him

'—and blest (in this he will say blest) 'with a mind that set him above depend-'ence, and making an absolute reliance on 'Providence and his own endeavours— 'how I say, shall such a man pretend to 'describe and enter into characters in 'upper life?'

However, he set about it, and in 1754 produced *Sir Charles Grandison*, or as he had originally intended to call it, the *Good Man*, in six octavo volumes.

I am not going to say he entirely succeeded with his good man, who I know has been called an odious prig. I have read *Sir Charles Grandison* once—I cannot promise ever to read it again, and yet who knows what may happen? Sir Walter Scott, in his delightful, good-humoured fashion, tells a tale of a venerable lady of his acquaintance, who, when she became subject to drowsy fits, chose to have *Sir Charles* read to her as she sat in her elbow chair in preference to any other work; because, said she, 'should I drop asleep in 'the course of the reading, I am sure when 'I awake I shall have lost none of the story,

'but shall find the party where I left them,
'conversing in the cedar-parlour.'

After *Sir Charles*, Richardson wrote no more. Indeed, there was nothing to write about, unless he had taken the advice of a morose clerical friend who wrote to him: 'I hope you intend to give us a bad woman '—expensive, imperious, lewd, and, at last, 'a drammer. This is a fruitful and neces-'sary subject which will strike and enter-'tain to a miracle.' Mr. Richardson replied jocosely that if the Rev. Mr. Skelton would only sketch the she-devil for him, he would find room for her somewhere, and the subject dropped. The wife of the celebrated German poet, Klopstock, wrote to him in her broken English: 'Having fin-'ished your *Clarissa* (oh, the heavenly 'book!) I would prayed you to write the 'history of a manly *Clarissa*, but I had 'not courage enough at that time. I 'should have it no more to-day, as this is 'only my first English letter; but I am now 'Klopstock's wife, and then I was only the 'single young girl. You have since written 'the manly *Clarissa* without my prayer. 'Oh, you have done it to the great joy and

'thanks of all your happy readers! Now 'you can write no more. You must write 'the history of an Angel.'

The poor lady died the following year under melancholy circumstances, but her prophecy proved true. Richardson wrote no more. He died in 1761, seventy-two years of age. His will, after directing numerous mourning-rings to be given to certain friends, proceeds as follows: 'Had 'I given rings to all the ladies who have 'honoured me with their correspondence, 'and whom I sincerely venerate for their 'amiable qualities, it would even in this 'last solemn act appear like ostentation.'

It now only remains to say two or three words about Richardson's great popularity abroad. Until quite recently, he and Sterne may be said to have been the only popular English authors abroad; perhaps Goldsmith should be added to the party. Foreigners never felt any difficulty about him or about the tradition he violated. The celebrated author of *Manon Lescaut* translated *Clarissa* into French, though it was subsequently better done by a less famous hand. She was also turned into

German and Dutch. Foreigners, of course, could not be expected to appreciate the hopeless absurdity of a man who lived at Parson's Green attempting to describe the upper classes. Horace Walpole when in Paris did his best to make this plain, but he failed. Say what he might, *Clarissa* lay on the toilet tables of the French Princesses, and everybody was raving about her. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was also very angry. 'Richardson,' says she, writing to the Countess of Bute, 'has no 'idea of the manners of high life. Such 'liberties as pass between Mr. Lovelace and 'his cousins are not to be excused by the 'relation. I should have been much aston-'ished if Lord Denbigh should have offered 'to kiss me; and, I dare swear Lord Tren-'tham never attempted such impertinence 'to you.' To the English reader these criticisms of Lady Mary's have immense value; but the French sentimentalist, with his continental insolence, did not care a sou what impertinences Lord Denbigh and Lord Trentham might or might not have attempted towards their female cousins. He simply read his *Clarissa* and lifted up

his voice and wept: and so, to do her justice, did Lady Mary herself. 'This Rich-'ardson,' she writes, 'is a strange fellow. 'I heartily despise him and eagerly read 'him, nay, sob over his works in a most 'scandalous manner.'

The effect produced upon Rousseau by Richardson is historical. Without *Clarissa* there would have been no *Nouvelle Heloïse*, and had there been no *Nouvelle Heloïse* everyone of us would have been somewhat different from what we are.

The elaborate eulogy of Diderot is well-known, and though extravagant in parts is full of true criticism. One sentence only I will quote: 'I have observed,' he says, 'that in a company where the works of 'Richardson were reading either privately 'or aloud the conversation at once became 'more interesting and animating.' This, surely, is a legitimate test to which to submit a novel. You sometimes hear people say of a book, 'Oh, it is not worth 'talking about! I was only reading it.'

The great Napoleon was a true Richardsonian. Only once did he ever seem to take any interest in an Englishman. It

was whilst he was first consul and when he was introduced to an officer called Lovelace, 'Why,' he exclaimed with emotion, 'that is the name of the man in '*Clarissa!*' When our own great critic, Hazlitt, heard of this incident he fell in love with Napoleon on the spot, and subsequently wrote his life in numerous volumes.

In Germany *Clarissa* had a great sale, and those of you who are acquainted with German sentiment, will have no difficulty in tracing a good deal of it to its original fountain in Fleet Street.

As a man, Richardson had perhaps only two faults. He was very nervous on the subject of his health and he was very vain. His first fault gave a great deal of trouble to his wives and families, his second afforded nobody anything but pleasure. The vanity of a distinguished man, if at the same time he happens to be a good man, is a quality so agreeable in its manifestations that to look for it and not to find it would be to miss a pleasure. When the French poet Boileau was invited to Versailles by Louis Quatorze, he

was much annoyed by the vanity of that monarch. 'Whenever,' said he, 'the con-'versation left the king's doings'—and, let us guess, just approached the poet's verses—'his majesty always had a yawn-'ing-fit, or suggested a walk on the ter-'race.' The fact is, it is not vanity, but contending vanities, that give pain.

As for those of you who cannot read Richardson's nineteen volumes, it can only be said you are a large and intelligent class of persons. You number amongst you poets like Byron—for I presume Byron is still among the poets—and philosophers like d'Alembert, who, when asked whether Richardson was not right in imitating Nature, replied, 'Yes, 'but not to the point of ennui.' We must not bear you malice or blacken your private characters. On the other hand, you must not sneer at us or call us milksops. There is nothing to be proud of, I can assure you, in not being able to read *Clarissa Harlowe*, or to appreciate the genius which created Lovelace.

A French critic, M. Scherer, has had the audacity to doubt whether *Tristram Shandy*

is much read in England, and it is commonly asserted in France that *Clarissa* is too good for us. Tristram may be left to his sworn admirers who could at any moment take the field with all the pomp and circumstance of war, but with Clarissa it is different. Her bodyguard is small and often in need of recruits. This indeed is my apology for the trouble I have put you to.

EDWARD GIBBON

A LECTURE

'It was at Rome, on the 15th of October, '1764, as I sat musing amidst the ruins of 'the Capitol, while the bare-footed fryars 'were singing vespers in the Temple of Ju-'piter that the idea of writing the Decline 'and Fall of the City first started to my 'mind.

'It was on the day, or rather night, of 'the 27th of June, 1787, between the hours 'of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last 'lines of the last page, in a summer-house 'in my garden. After laying down my pen 'I took several turns in a *berceau*, or covered 'walk of acacias, which commands a pros-'pect of the country, the lake and the moun-'tains. The air was temperate, the sky was 'serene, the silver orb of the moon was 'reflected from the waters and all nature 'was silent. I will not dissemble the first 'emotions of joy on recovery of my freedom

'and perhaps of the establishment of my 'fame. But my pride was soon humbled 'and a sober melancholy was spread over 'my mind by the idea that I had taken an 'everlasting leave of an old and agreeable 'companion, and that whatever might be 'the future date of my history, the life of 'the historian must be short and preca- 'rious.'

Between these two passages lies the romance of Gibbon's life — a romance which must be looked for, not, indeed, in the volumes, whether the original quartos or the subsequent octavos, of his history — but in the elements which went to make that history what it is: the noble conception, the shaping intellect, the mastered learning, the stately diction and the daily toil.

Mr. Bagehot has declared that the way to reverence Gibbon is not to read him at all, but to look at him, from outside, in the bookcase, and think how much there is within; what a course of events, what a muster-roll of names, what a steady solemn sound. All Mr. Bagehot's jokes have a kernel inside them. The supreme merit of Gibbon's history is not to be found in deep

thoughts, or in wide views, or in profound knowledge of human nature, or prophetic vision. Seldom was there an historian less well-equipped with these fine things than he. Its glory is its architecture, its structure, its organism. There it is, it is worth looking at, for it is invulnerable, indispensable, immortal. The metaphors which have been showered upon it, prove how fond people have been of looking at it from outside. It has been called a Bridge, less obviously an Aqueduct, more prosaically a Road. We applaud the design and marvel at the execution.

There is something mournful in this chorus of approbation in which it is not difficult to detect the notes of surprise. It tells a tale of infirmity both of life and purpose. A complete thing staggers us. We are accustomed to failure.

> 'What act proves all its thought had been?'

The will is weak, opportunities are barren, temper uncertain and life short.

> 'I thought all labour, yet no less,
> Bear up beneath their unsuccess;
> Look at the end of work: contrast
> The petty done — the undone vast.'

It is Gibbon's triumph that he made his thoughts acts. He is not exactly what you call a pious writer, but he is provocative of at least one pious feeling. A sabbatical calm results from the contemplation of his labours. Succeeding scholars have read his history and pronounced it good. It is likewise finished. Hence this feeling of surprise.

Gibbon's life has the simplicity of an epic. His work was to write his history. Nothing else was allowed to rob this idea of its majesty. It brooked no rival near its throne. It dominated his life, for though a man of pleasure, and, to speak plainly, a good bit of a coxcomb, he had always the cadences of the *Decline and Fall* in his ears. It has been wittily said of him, that he came at last to believe that he was the Roman Empire, or, at all events, something equally majestic and imposing. His life had, indeed, its episodes, but so has an epic. Gibbon's episodes are interesting, abrupt, and always concluded. In his sixteenth year he, without the aid of a priest or the seductions of ritual, read himself into the Church of Rome, and was one fine June

morning in 1753 baptized by a Jesuit father. By Christmas, 1754, he had read himself out again. Gibbon's conversion was perfectly genuine and should never be spoken of otherwise than respectfully, but it was entirely a matter of books and reading. 'Persons influence us,' cries Dr. Newman, 'voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds 'inflame us. Many a man will live and die 'upon a dogma; no man will be a martyr 'for a conclusion.' It takes all sorts to make a world, and our plump historian was one of those whose actions are determined in libraries, whose lives are unswayed by personal influences, to whom conclusions may mean a great deal, but dogmas certainly nothing. Whether Gibbon on leaving off his Catholicism ever became a Protestant again, except in the sense that Bayle declared himself one, is doubtful. But all this makes an interesting episode. The second episode is his well-known love affair with Mademoiselle Curchod, afterwards Madame Neckar and the mother of that social portent, Madame de Stael. Gibbon, of course, behaved badly in this affair. He fell in love, made known his

plight, obtained mademoiselle's consent, and then speeded home to tell his father. 'Love,' said he, 'will make me eloquent.' The elder Gibbon would not hear of it: the younger tamely acquiesced. His very acquiescence, like all else about him, has become classical. 'I sighed as a lover, 'I obeyed as a son.' He proceeds: 'My 'wound was insensibly healed by time, ab-'sence and the habits of a new life.' It is shocking. Never, surely, was love so flouted before. Gibbon is charitably supposed by some persons to have regretted Paganism, but it was lucky for both him and for me that the gods had abandoned Olympus, since otherwise it would have required the pen of a Greek dramatist to depict the horrors that must have eventually overtaken him for so impious an outrage; as it was, he simply grew fatter every day. A very recent French biographer of Madame Neckar, who has published some letters of Gibbon's for the first time, evidently expects his readers to get very angry with this perfidious son of Albion. It is much too late to get angry. Of all the many wrongs women suffer at

the hands of men, that of not marrying them, is the one they ought to find it easiest to forgive; they generally do forgive. Madame Neckar forgave, and if she, why not you and I? Years after she welcomed Gibbon to her house, and there he used to sit, fat and famous, tapping his snuff-box and arranging his ruffles, and watching with a smile of complacency the infantine, yet I doubt not, the pronounced gambols of the vivacious Corinne. After Neckar's fall, Gibbon writes to Madame: 'Your husband's condition is always worthy of envy, 'he knows himself, his enemies respect 'him, Europe admires him, *you* love him.' I decline to be angry with such a man.

His long residence in Switzerland, an unusual thing in those days, makes a third episode, which, in so far as it led him to commence author in the French language, and to study Pascal as a master of style, was not without its effects on his history, but it never diverted him from his studies or changed their channels. Though he lived fifteen years in Lausanne, he never climbed a mountain or ever went to the foot of one, for though not wholly indifferent to Na-

ture, he loved to see her framed in a window. He actually has the audacity, in a note to his fifty-ninth chapter, to sneer at St. Bernard because that true lover of nature on one occasion, either because his joy in the external world at times interfered with his devotions, or, as I think, because he was bored by the vulgar rhapsodies of his monkish companions, abstained from looking at the lake of Geneva. Gibbon's note is characteristic, 'To admire 'or despise St. Bernard as he ought, the 'reader should have before the windows of 'his library the beauty of that incomparable 'landscape.' St. Bernard was to Gibbon, as Wordsworth to Pope,

> 'A forest seer,
> A minstrel of the natural year,
> A lover true who knew by heart
> Each joy the mountain dales impart.'

He was proud to confess that whatever knowledge he had of the scriptures he had acquired chiefly in the woods and the fields, and that beeches and oaks had been his best teachers of the Word of God. One cannot fancy Gibbon in a forest. But if Gibbon had not been fonder of the library

than of the lake, though he might have known more than he did of 'moral evil and 'of good,' he would hardly have been the author he was.

But the *Decline and Fall* was threatened from a quarter more likely to prove dangerous than the 'incomparable landscape.' On September 10th, 1774, Gibbon writes:

'Yesterday morning about half-past 'seven, as I was destroying an army of 'barbarians, I heard a double rap at the 'door and my friend Mr. Eliot was soon 'introduced. After some idle conversa-'tion he told me that if I was desirous of 'being in parliament he had an *indepen-'dent* seat, very much at my service. This 'is a fine prospect opening upon me, and 'if next spring I should take my seat and 'publish my book — (he meant the first 'volume only) — it will be a very memo-'rable era in my life. I am ignorant whether 'my borough will be Liskeard or St. Ger-'mains.'

Mr. Eliot controlled four boroughs and it was Liskeard that became Gibbon's, and for ten years, though not always for Liskeard, he sat in parliament. Ten most

eventful years they were too, both in our national and parliamentary history. This might have been not an episode, but a catastrophe. Mr. Eliot's untimely entrance might not merely have postponed the destruction of a horde of barbarians, but have destroyed the history itself. However Mr. Gibbon never opened his mouth in the House of Commons; 'I assisted,' says he, in his magnificent way, 'at,' (mark the preposition,) 'at the debates of a free assem-'bly,' that is, he supported Lord North. He was not from the first content to be a mute; he prepared a speech and almost made up his mind to catch Sir Fletcher Norton's eye. The subject, no mean one, was to be the American war; but his courage oozed away, he did not rise in his place. A month after he writes from Boodle's: 'I am still 'a mute, it is more tremendous than I 'imagined; the great speakers fill me with 'despair, the bad ones with terror.' In 1779 his silent assistance was rewarded with a seat at the Board of Trade, and a salary of between seven and eight hundred a year. Readers of Burke's great speech on Economical Reform will remember the twenty

minutes he devoted to this marvellous Board of Trade, with its perpetual virtual adjournment and unbroken sitting vacation. Such was Gibbon's passion for style that he listened to the speech with delight, and gives us the valuable assurance that it was spoken just as it reads, and that nobody enjoyed either hearing or reading it more than he did. What a blessing it is to have a good temper! But Gibbon's constituency did not approve of his becoming a minister's man, and he lost his seat at the general election of 1783. 'Mr. 'Eliot,' this is Gibbon's account of it, 'Mr. 'Eliot was now deeply engaged in the 'measures of opposition and the electors 'of Liskeard are commonly of the same 'opinion as Mr. Eliot.' Lord North found him another seat, and for a short time he sat in the new parliament for the important seaport of Lymington, but his office being abolished in 1784, he bade parliament and England farewell, and, taking his library with him, departed for Lausanne to conclude his history.

Gibbon, after completing his history, entertained notions of writing other books,

but, as a matter of fact, he had but one thing left him to do in order to discharge his duty to the universe. He had written a magnificent history of the Roman Empire. It remained to write the history of the historian. Accordingly we have the autobiography. These two immortal works act and react upon one another; the history sends us to the autobiography, and the autobiography returns us to the history.

The style of the autobiography is better than that of the history. The awful word 'verbose' has been launched against certain pages of the history by a critic, formidable and friendly — the great Porson. There is not a superfluous word in the autobiography. The fact is, in this matter of style, Gibbon took a great deal more pains with himself than he did with the empire. He sent the history, except the first volume, straight to his printer from his first rough copy. He made six different sketches of the autobiography. It is a most studied performance, and may be boldly pronounced perfect. Not to know it almost by heart is to deny yourself a

great and wholly innocent pleasure. Of the history it is permissible to say with Mr. Silas Wegg, 'I haven't been, not to 'say right slap through him very lately, 'having been otherwise employed, Mr. 'Boffin;' but the autobiography is no more than a good-sized pamphlet. It has had the reward of shortness. It is not only our best, but our best known autobiography. Almost its first sentence is about the style it is to be in: 'The style 'shall be simple and familiar, but style is 'the image of character, and the habits 'of correct writing may produce without 'labour or design the appearance of art 'and study.' There is nothing artless or unstudied about the autobiography, but is it not sometimes a relief to exchange the quips and cranks of some of our modern writers, whose humour it is to be as it were for ever slapping their readers in the face or grinning at them from unexpected corners, for the stately roll of the Gibbonian sentence? The style settled, he proceeds to say something about the pride of race, but the pride of letters soon conquers it, and as we glance down the

page we see advancing to meet us, curling its head, as Shakespeare says of billows in a storm, the god-like sentence which makes it for ever certain, not indeed that there will never be a better novel than *Tom Jones*, for that I suppose is still just possible, but that no novel can ever receive so magnificent a compliment. The sentence is well known but irresistible.

'Our immortal Fielding was of the 'younger branch of the Earls of Denbigh 'who draw their origin from the Counts of 'Hapsburg. Far different have been the 'fortunes of the English and German divis-'ions of the family. The former, the 'knights and sheriffs of Leicestershire, 'have slowly risen to the dignity of a 'peerage, the latter, the Emperors of 'Germany and Kings of Spain, have threat-'ened the liberty of the old and invaded 'the treasures of the new world. The 'successors of Charles the Fifth may 'disdain their brethren of England, but 'the romance of *Tom Jones*, that exquisite 'picture of human manners, will outlive the 'Palace of the Escurial, and the imperial 'eagle of the House of Austria.'

Well might Thackeray exclaim in his lecture on Fielding, 'There can be no 'gainsaying the sentence of this great 'judge. To have your name mentioned 'by Gibbon is like having it written on the 'dome of St. Peter's. Pilgrims from all 'the world admire and behold it.'

After all this preliminary magnificence Gibbon condescends to approach his own pedigree. There was not much to tell, and the little there was he did not know. A man of letters whose memory is respected by all lovers of old books and Elizabethan lyrics, Sir Egerton Brydges, was a cousin of Gibbon's, and as genealogies were this unfortunate man's consuming passion, he of course knew all that Gibbon ought to have known about the family, and speaks with a herald's contempt of the historian's perfunctory investigations. 'It is a very unaccountable 'thing,' says Sir Egerton, 'that Gibbon 'was so ignorant of the immediate branch 'of the family whence he sprang'; but the truth is that Gibbon was far prouder of his Palace of the Escurial, and his imperial eagle of the House of Austria, than of his

family tree, which was indeed of the most ordinary hedge-row description. His grandfather was a South Sea director, and when the bubble burst he was compelled by act of parliament to disclose on oath his whole fortune. He returned it at £106,543 5s. 6d., exclusive of antecedent settlements. It was all confiscated, and then £10,000 was voted the poor man to begin again upon. Such bold oppression, says the grandson, can scarcely be shielded by the omnipotence of parliament. The old man did not keep his £10,000 in a napkin, and speedily began, as his grandson puts it, to erect on the ruins of the old, the edifice of a new fortune. The ruins must, I think, have been more spacious than the affidavit would suggest, for when only sixteen years afterwards, the elder Gibbon died he was found to be possessed of considerable property in Sussex, Hampshire, Buckinghamshire, and the New River Company, as well as of a spacious house with gardens and grounds at Putney. A fractional share of this inheritance secured to our historian the liberty of action so necessary for the accomplishment of his

great design. Large fortunes have their uses. Mr. Milton, the scrivener, Mr. Gibbon, the South Sea director, and Dr. Darwin of Shrewsbury had respectively something to do with *Paradise Lost*, *The Decline and Fall*, and *The Origin of Species*.

The most, indeed the only, interesting fact about the Gibbon *entourage* is that the greatest of English mystics, William Law, the inimitable author of *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life, adapted to the State and Conditions of all Orders of Christians*, was long tutor to the historian's father, and in that capacity accompanied the future historian to Emanuel College, Cambridge, and was afterwards, and till the end of his days, spiritual director to Miss Hester Gibbon, the historian's eccentric maiden aunt.

It is an unpleasing impertinence for anyone to assume that nobody save himself reads any particular book. I read with astonishment the other day that Sir Humphry Davy's *Consolations in Travel; or, The Closing Days of a Philosopher's Life*, was a curious and totally forgotten work. It is, however, always safe to say

of a good book that it is not read as much as it ought to be, and of Law's *Serious Call* you may add, 'or as much as it used 'to be.' It is a book with a strange and moving spiritual pedigree. Dr. Johnson, one remembers, took it up carelessly at Oxford, expecting to find it a dull book, 'as,' (the words are his, not mine,) 'such 'books generally are; but,' he proceeds, 'I 'found Law an overmatch for me, and this 'was the first occasion of my thinking in 'earnest.' George Whitfield writes, 'Soon 'after my coming up to the university, 'seeing a small edition of Mr. Law's *Seri-*'*ous Call* in a friend's hand, I soon pur-'chased it. God worked powerfully upon 'my soul by that excellent treatise.' The celebrated Thomas Scott, of Aston Sandford, with the confidence of his school, dates the beginning of his spiritual life from the hour when he 'carelessly,' as he says, 'took up Mr. Law's *Serious Call*, a 'book I had hitherto treated with con-'tempt.' When we remember how Newman in his *Apologia* speaks of Thomas Scott as the writer 'to whom, humanly 'speaking, I almost owe my soul,' we be-

come lost amidst a mazy dance of strange, spectral influences which flit about the centuries and make us what we are. Splendid achievement though the *History of the Decline and Fall* may be, glorious monument though it is, more lasting than brass, of learning and industry, yet in sundry moods it seems but a poor and barren thing by the side of a book which, like Law's *Serious Call*, has proved its power

'To pierce the heart and tame the will.'

But I must put the curb on my enthusiasm, or I shall find myself re-echoing the sentiment of a once celebrated divine who brought down Exeter Hall by proclaiming, at the top of his voice, that he would sooner be the author of *The Washerwoman on Salisbury Plain* than of *Paradise Lost*.

But Law's *Serious Call*, to do it only bare literary justice, is a great deal more like *Paradise Lost* than *The Washerwoman on Salisbury Plain*, and deserves better treatment at the hands of religious people than to be reprinted, as it too often is, in a miserable, truncated, witless form which would never have succeeded in arresting

the wandering attention of Johnson or in saving the soul of Thomas Scott. The motto of all books of original genius is :

'Love me or leave me alone.'

Gibbon read Law's *Serious Call*, but it left him where it found him. 'Had not,' so he writes, 'Law's vigorous mind been 'clouded by enthusiasm, he might be ranked 'with the most agreeable and ingenious 'writers of his time.'

Upon the death of Law in 1761, it is sad to have to state that Miss Hester Gibbon cast aside the severe rule of female dress which he had expounded in his *Serious Call*, and she had practised for sixty years of her life. She now appeared like Malvolio, resplendent in yellow stockings. Still, it was something to have kept the good lady's feet from straying into such evil garments for so long. Miss Gibbon had a comfortable estate ; and our historian, as her nearest male relative, kept his eye upon the reversion. The fifteenth and sixteenth chapters had created a coolness, but he addressed her a letter in which he assured her that, allowing for differences of expres-

sion, he had the satisfaction of feeling that practically he and she thought alike on the great subject of religion. Whether she believed him or not I cannot say; but she left him her estate in Sussex. I must stop a moment to consider the hard and far different fate of Porson. Gibbon had taken occasion to refer to the seventh verse of the fifth chapter of the First Epistle of St. John as spurious. It has now disappeared from our Bibles, without leaving a trace even in the margin. So judicious a writer as Dean Alford long ago, in his Greek Testament, observed, 'There is not a shadow 'of a reason for supposing it genuine.' An archdeacon of Gibbon's period thought otherwise, and asserted the genuineness of the text, whereupon Porson wrote a book and proved it to be no portion of the inspired text. On this a female relative who had Porson down in her will for a comfortable annuity of £300, revoked that part of her testamentary disposition, and substituted a paltry bequest of £30: 'for,' said she, 'I hear he has been writing 'against the Holy Scriptures.' As Porson only got £16 for writing the book, it cer-

tainly cost him dear. But the book remains a monument of his learning and wit. The last quarter of the annuity must long since have been paid.

Gibbon, the only one of a family of five who managed to grow up at all, had no school life; for though a short time at Westminster, his feeble health prevented regularity of attendance. His father never won his respect, nor his mother (who died when he was ten) his affection. 'I am 'tempted,' he says, 'to enter my protest 'against the trite and lavish praise of the 'happiness of our boyish years which is 'echoed with so much affectation in the 'world. That happiness I have never 'known.' Upon which passage Ste. Beuve characteristically remarks 'that it 'is those who have been deprived of a 'mother's solicitude, of the down and 'flower of tender affection, of the vague 'yet penetrating charm of dawning im-'pressions, who are most easily denuded 'of the sentiment of religion.'

Gibbon was, however, born free of the 'fair brotherhood' Macaulay so exquisitely described in his famous poem, written

after the Edinburgh election. Reading became his sole employment. He enjoyed all the advantages of the most irregular of educations, and in his fifteenth year arrived at Oxford, to use his celebrated words, though for that matter almost every word in the *Autobiography* is celebrated, with a stock of erudition that might have puzzled a doctor, and a degree of ignorance of which a schoolboy would have been ashamed — for example, he did not know the Greek alphabet, nor is there any reason to suppose that he would have been taught it at Oxford.

I do not propose to refer to what he says about his university. I hate giving pain, besides which there have been new statutes since 1752. In Gibbon's time there were no public examinations at all, and no class-lists — a Saturnian reign which I understand it is now sought to restore. Had Gibbon followed his father's example and gone to Cambridge, he would have found the Mathematical Tripos fairly started on its beneficent career, and might have taken as good a place in it as Dr. Dodd had just done, a divine

who is still year after year referred to in the University Calendar as the author of *Thoughts in Prison*, the circumstance that the thinker was later on taken from prison, and hung by the neck until he was dead being no less wisely than kindly omitted from a publication, one of the objects of which is to inspire youth with confidence that the path of mathematics is the way to glory.

On his profession of Catholicism, Gibbon, *ipso facto* ceased to be a member of the university, and his father, with a sudden accession of good sense, packed off the young pervert, who at that time had a very big head and a very small body, and was just as full of controversial theology as he could hold, to a Protestant pastor's at Lausanne, where in an uncomfortable house, with an ill-supplied table and a scarcity of pocket-money, the ex-fellow-commoner of Magdalen was condemned to live from his sixteenth to his twenty-first year. His time was mainly spent in reading. Here he learnt Greek; here also he fell in love with Mademoiselle Curchod. In the spring of 1758 he came

home. He was at first very shy, and went out but little, pursuing his studies even in lodgings in Bond Street. But he was shortly to be shaken out of his dumps, and made an Englishman and a soldier.

If anything could provoke Gibbon's placid shade, it would be the light and airy way his military experiences are often spoken of, as if, like a modern volunteer, he had but attended an Easter Monday review. I do not believe the history of literature affords an equally striking example of self-sacrifice. He was the most sedentary of men. He hated exercise, and rarely took any. Once after spending some weeks in the summer at Lord Sheffield's country place, when about to go, his hat was missing. 'When,' he was asked, 'did you last see it?' 'On my arrival,' he replied. 'I left it on the hall-table; I have had no occasion for it since.' Lord Sheffield's guests always knew that they would find Mr. Gibbon in the library, and meet him at the dinner-table. He abhorred a horse. His one vocation, and his only avocation, was reading, not lazy glancing and skipping, but downright sav-

age reading — geography, chronology, and all the tougher sides of history. What glorious, what martial times, indeed, must those have been that made Mr. Gibbon leap into the saddle, desert his books, and for two mortal years and a half live in camps! He was two months at Blandford, three months at Cranbrook, six months at Dover, four months at Devizes, as many at Salisbury, and six more at Southampton, where the troops were disbanded. During all this time Captain Gibbon was energetically employed. He dictated the orders and exercised the battalion. It did him a world of good. What a pity Carlyle could not have been subjected to the same discipline! The cessation, too, of his habit of continued reading, gave him time for a little thinking, and when he returned to his father's house, in Hampshire, he had become fixed in his determination to write a history, though of what was still undecided.

I am rather afraid to say it, for no two men could well be more unlike one another, but Gibbon always reminds me in an odd inverted way of Milton. I suppose it is

because as the one is our grandest author, so the other is our most grandiose. Both are self-conscious and make no apology — Milton magnificently self-conscious, Gibbon splendidly so. Everyone knows the great passages in which Milton, in 1642, asked the readers of his pamphlet on the reason of Church government urged against prelacy, to go on trust with him for some years for his great unwritten poem, as 'being a 'work not to be raised from the heat of 'youth or the vapour of wine, like that 'which flows at waste from the pen of some 'vulgar amorist or the trencher fury of a 'rhyming parasite, nor to be obtained by 'the invocation of Dame Memory and her 'seven daughters, but by devout prayer to 'that Eternal Spirit who can enrich with 'all utterance and knowledge, and sends 'out His seraphim with the hallow'd fire 'of His Altar to touch and purify the lips 'of whom He pleases: to this must be 'added industrious and select reading, 'study, observation and insight into all 'seemly opinions, arts, and affairs.' Different men, different minds. There are things terrestrial as well as things celes-

tial. Certainly Gibbon's *Autobiography* contains no passages like those which are to be found in Milton's pamphlets; but for all that he, in his mundane way, consecrated himself for his self-imposed task, and spared no toil to equip himself for it. He, too, no less than Milton, had his high hope and his hard attempting. He tells us in his stateliest way how he first thought of one subject, and then another, and what progress he had made in his different schemes before he abandoned them, and what reasons induced him so to do. Providence watched over the future historian of the Roman Empire as surely as it did over the future author of *Paradise Lost*, as surely as it does over everyone who has it in him to do anything really great. Milton, we know, in early life was enamoured of King Arthur, and had it in his mind to make that blameless king the hero of his promised epic, but

> 'What resounds
> In fable or romance of Uther's son,
> Begirt with British and Amoric knights,'

can brook a moment's comparison with the baffled hero of *Paradise Lost*; so too,

what a mercy that Gibbon did not fritter away his splendid energy, as he once contemplated doing, on Sir Walter Raleigh, or squander his talents on a history of Switzerland or even of Florence!

After the disbanding of the militia Gibbon obtained his father's consent to spend the money it was originally proposed to lay out in buying him a seat in Parliament, upon foreign travel, and early in 1763 he reached Paris, where he abode three months. An accomplished scholar whose too early death all who knew him can never cease to deplore, Mr. Cotter Morison, whose sketch of Gibbon is, by general consent, admitted to be one of the most valuable books of a delightful series, does his best, with but partial success, to conceal his annoyance at Gibbon's stupidly placid enjoyment of Paris and French cookery. 'He does not seem to be aware,' says Mr. Morison, 'that he was witness-'ing one of the most singular social phases 'which have ever yet been presented in 'the history of man.' Mr. Morison does not, indeed, blame Gibbon for this, but having, as he had, the most intimate ac-

quaintance with this period of French history, and knowing the tremendous issues involved in it, he could not but be chagrined to notice how Gibbon remained callous and impervious. And, indeed, when the Revolution came it took no one more by surprise than it did the man who had written the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Writing, in 1792, to Lord Sheffield, Gibbon says, 'Remember 'the proud fabric of the French monarchy: 'not four years ago it stood founded, and 'might it not seem on the rock of time, 'force, and opinion, supported by the 'triple authority of the Church, the No-'bility, and the Parliament?' But the Revolution came for all that; and what, when it did come, did it teach Mr. Gibbon? 'Do not, I beseech you, tamper with Par-'liamentary representation. If you begin 'to improve the Constitution, you may be 'driven step by step from the disfranchise-'ment of Old Sarum to the King in New-'gate; the Lords voted useless, the bish-'ops abolished, the House of Commons '*sans culottes*.' The importance of shutting off the steam and sitting on the

safety-valve was what the French Revolution taught Mr. Gibbon. Mr. Bagehot says: 'Gibbon's horror of the French 'Revolution was derived from the fact 'that he had arrived at the conclusion that 'he was the sort of person a populace in-'variably kills.' An excellent reason, in my opinion, for hating revolution, but not for misunderstanding it.

After leaving Paris Gibbon lived nearly a year in Lausanne, reading hard to prepare himself for Italy. He made his own handbook. At last he felt himself fit to cross the Alps, which he did seated in an osier basket planted on a man's shoulders. He did not envy Hannibal his elephant. He lingered four months in Florence, and then entered Rome in a spirit of the most genuine and romantic enthusiasm. His zeal made him positively active, though it is impossible to resist a smile at the picture he draws of himself 'treading with a 'lofty step the ruins of the Forum.' He was in Rome eighteen weeks; there he had, as we saw at the beginning, his heavenly vision, to which he was not disobedient. He paid a visit of six weeks' duration

to Naples, and then returned home more rapidly. 'The spectacle of Venice,' he says, 'afforded some hours of astonishment.' Gibbon has sometimes been called 'long-winded,' but when he chooses, nobody can be shorter with either a city or a century.

He returned to England in 1765, and for five rather dull years lived in his father's house in the country or in London lodgings. In 1770 his father died, and in 1772 Gibbon took a house in Bentinck Street, Manchester Square, filled it with books — for in those days it must not be forgotten there was no public library of any kind in London — and worked hard at his first volume, which appeared in February, 1775. It made him famous, also infamous, since it concluded with the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters on Christianity. In 1781 two more volumes appeared. In 1783 he gave up Parliament and London, and rolled over Westminster Bridge in a post-chaise, on his way to Lausanne, where he had his home for the rest of his days. In May, 1788, the three last volumes appeared. He died in St. James's Street whilst on a

visit to London, on the 15th of January, 1794, of a complaint of a most pronounced character, which he had with characteristic and almost criminal indolence totally neglected for thirty years. He was buried in Fletching Churchyard, Sussex, in the family burial-place of his faithful friend and model editor, the first Lord Sheffield. He had not completed his fifty-eighth year.

Before concluding with a few very humble observations on Gibbon's writings, something ought to be said about him as a social being. In this aspect he had distinguished merit, though his fondness of, and fitness for, society came late. He had no school-days, no college days, no gilded youth. From sixteen to twenty-one he lived poorly in Lausanne, and came home more Swiss than English. Nor was his father of any use to him. It took him a long time to rub off his shyness; but the militia, Paris, and Rome, and, above all, the proud consciousness of a noble design, made a man of him, and after 1772 he became a well-known figure in London society. He was a man of fashion as well as of letters. In this

respect, and, indeed, in all others, except their common love of learning, he differed from Dr. Johnson. Lords and ladies, remarked that high authority, don't like having their mouths shut. Gibbon never shut anybody's mouth, and in Johnson's presence rarely opened his own. Johnson's dislike of Gibbon does not seem to have been based upon his heterodoxy, but his ugliness. 'He is such an amazing ugly 'fellow,' said that Adonis. Boswell follows suit, and, with still less claim to be critical, complains loudly of Gibbon's ugliness. He also hated him very sincerely. 'The fellow 'poisons the whole club to me,' he cries. I feel sorry for Boswell, who has deserved well of the human race. Ironical people like Gibbon are rarely tolerant of brilliant folly. Gibbon, no doubt, was ugly. We get a glance at him in one of Horace Walpole's letters, which, sparkling as it does with vanity, spite, and humour, is always pleasant. He is writing to Mr. Mason:

'You will be diverted to hear that Mr. 'Gibbon has quarrelled with me. He lent 'me his second volume in the middle of

'November; I returned it with a most civil 'panegyric. He came for more incense. 'I gave it, but, alas! with too much sin-'cerity; I added: "Mr. Gibbon, I am sorry '"*you* should have pitched on so disgust-'"ing a subject as the Constantinopolitan '"history. There is so much of the Arians '"and Eunomians and semi-Pelagians; and '"there is such a strange contrast between '"Roman and Gothic manners, that, though '"you have written the story as well as it '"could be written, I fear few will have '"patience to read it." He coloured, all 'his round features squeezed themselves 'into sharp angles; he screwed up his but-'ton-mouth, and rapping his snuff-box, said, '"It had never been put together before" '—so *well* he meant to add, but gulped it. 'He meant so *well*, certainly, for Tillemont, 'whom he quotes in every page, has done 'the very thing. Well, from that hour to 'this, I have never seen him, though he 'used to call once or twice a week; nor 'has he sent me the third volume, as he 'promised. I well knew his vanity, even 'about his ridiculous face and person, but 'thought he had too much sense to avow

'it so palpably.' 'So much,' adds Walpole, with sublime nescience of the verdict of posterity upon his own most amusing self, 'so much for literature and its fops.'

Male ugliness is an endearing quality, and in a man of great talents it assists his reputation. It mollifies our inferiority to be able to add to our honest admiration of anyone's great intellectual merit, 'But did you ever see such a chin!'

Nobody except Johnson, who was morbid on the subject of looks, liked Gibbon the less for having a button-mouth and a ridiculous nose. He was, Johnson and Boswell apart, a popular member of the club. Sir Joshua and he were, in particular, great cronies, and went about to all kinds of places, and mixed in every sort of society. In May, June, and July, 1779, Gibbon sat for his picture — that famous portrait to be found at the beginning of every edition of the History. Sir Joshua notes in his Diary: 'No new sitters — hard at work repainting 'the "Nativity," and busy with sittings of 'Gibbon.'

If we are to believe contemporary gossip, this was not the first time Reynolds

had depicted the historian. Some years earlier the great painter had executed a celebrated portrait of Dr. Beattie, still pleasingly remembered by the lovers of old-fashioned poetry as the poet of *The Minstrel*, but who, in 1773, was better known as the author of an *Essay on Truth*. This personage, who in later life, it is melancholy to relate, took to drinking, is represented in Reynolds's picture in his Oxford gown of Doctor of Laws, with his famous essay under his arm, while beside him is Truth, habited as an angel, holding in one hand a pair of scales, and with the other thrusting down three frightful figures emblematic of Sophistry, Scepticism, and Infidelity. That Voltaire and Hume stood for two of these figures was no secret, but it was whispered Gibbon was the third. Even if so, an incident so trifling was not likely to ruffle the composure, or prevent the intimacy, of two such good-tempered men as Reynolds and Gibbon. The latter was immensely proud of Reynolds's portrait — the authorised portrait, of course — the one for which he had paid. He had it hanging up in his

library at Lausanne, and, if we may believe Charles Fox, was fonder of looking at it than out of the window upon that incomparable landscape, with indifference to which he had twitted St. Bernard.

But, as I have said, Gibbon was a man of fashion as well as a man of letters. In another volume of Walpole we have a glimpse of him playing a rubber of whist. His opponents were Horace himself, and Lady Beck. His partner was a lady whom Walpole irreverently calls the Archbishopess of Canterbury.[1] At Brooks's, White's, and Boodle's, Gibbon was a prime favourite. His quiet manner, ironical humour, and perpetual good temper made him excellent company. He is, indeed, reported once, at Brooks's, to have expressed a desire to see the heads of Lord North and half a dozen ministers on the table; but as this was only a few days before he accepted a seat at the Board of Trade at their hands, his wrath was evidently of

[1] By which title he refers to Mrs. Cornwallis, a lively lady who used to get her right reverend lord, himself a capital hand at whist, into great trouble by persisting in giving routs on Sunday.

the kind that does not allow the sun to go down upon it. His moods were usually mild:

> 'Soon as to Brooks's thence thy footsteps bend,
> What gratulations thy approach attend!
> See Gibbon rap his box, auspicious sign
> That classic wit and compliment combine.'

To praise Gibbon heartily, you must speak in low tones. 'His cheek,' says Mr. Morison, 'rarely flushes in enthusiasm 'for a good cause.' He was, indeed, not obviously on the side of the angels. But he was a dutiful son to a trying father, an affectionate and thoughtful stepson to a stepmother who survived him, and the most faithful and warm-hearted of friends. In this article of friendship he not only approaches, but reaches, the romantic. While in his teens he made friends with a Swiss of his own age. A quarter of a century later on, we find the boyish companions chumming together, under the same roof at Lausanne, and delighting in each other's society. His attachment to Lord Sheffield is a beautiful thing. It is impossible to read Gibbon's letters without responding to the feeling which breathes

through Lord Sheffield's preface to the miscellaneous writings:

'The letters will prove how pleasant, 'friendly, and amiable Mr. Gibbon was in 'private life; and if in publishing letters 'so flattering to myself I incur the imputa- 'tion of vanity, I meet the charge with a 'frank confession that I am indeed highly 'vain of having enjoyed for so many years 'the esteem, the confidence, and the affec- 'tion of a man whose social qualities en- 'deared him to the most accomplished 'society, whose talents, great as they were, 'must be acknowledged to have been fully 'equalled by the sincerity of his friendship.'

To have been pleasant, friendly, amiable and sincere in friendship, to have written the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and the *Autobiography*, must be Gibbon's excuse for his unflushing cheek.

To praise Gibbon is not wholly superfluous; to commend his history would be so. In May, 1888, it attained, as a whole, its hundredth year. Time has not told upon it. It stands unaltered, and with its authority unimpaired. It would be invidious to name the histories it has seen

born and die. Its shortcomings have been pointed out — it is well; its inequalities exposed — that is fair; its style criticised — that is just. But it is still read. 'Whatever else is read,' says Professor Freeman, 'Gibbon must be.'

The tone he thought fit to adopt towards Christianity was, quite apart from all particular considerations, a mistaken one. No man is big enough to speak slightingly of the constructions his fellow-men have from time to time put upon the Infinite. And conduct which in a philosopher is ill-judged, is in an historian ridiculous. Gibbon's sneers could not alter the fact that his History, which he elected to style the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, might equally well, as Dean Stanley has observed, have been called the 'Rise and Progress of the Christian Church.' This tone of Gibbon's was the more unfortunate because he was not of those men who are by the order of their minds incapable of theology. He was an admirable theologian, and, even as it is, we have Cardinal Newman's authority for the assertion, that Gibbon is the only Church historian

worthy of the name who has written in English.

Gibbon's love of the unseemly may also be deprecated. His is not the boisterous impropriety which may sometimes be observed staggering across the pages of Mr. Carlyle, but the more offensive variety which is overheard sniggering in the notes.

The importance, the final value, of Gibbon's History has been assailed in high quarters. Coleridge, in a well-known passage in his *Table Talk* — too long to be quoted — said Gibbon was a man of immense reading; but he had no philosophy. 'I protest,' he adds, 'I do not re-'member a single philosophical attempt 'made throughout the work to fathom the 'ultimate causes of the decline and fall of 'the empire.' This spoiled Gibbon for Coleridge, who has told us that 'though 'he had read all the famous histories, and 'he believed some history of every country 'or nation, that is or ever existed, he had 'never done so for the story itself — the 'only thing interesting to him being the 'principles to be evolved from and illus-'trated by the facts.'

I am not going to insult the majestic though thickly-veiled figure of the Philosophy of History. Every sensible man, though he might blush to be called a philosopher, must wish to be the wiser for his reading; but it may, I think, be fairly said that the first business of an historian is to tell his story, nobly and splendidly, with vivacity and vigour. Then I do not see why we children of a larger growth may not be interested in the annals of mankind simply as a story, without worrying every moment to evolve principles from each part of it. If I choose to be interested in the colour of Mary Queen of Scots' eyes, or the authorship of the *Letters of Junius*, I claim the right to be so. Of course, if I imagine either of these subjects to be matters of importance — if I devote my life to their elucidation, if I bore my friends with presentation pamphlets about them — why, then, I am either a feeble fribble or an industrious fool; but if I do none of these things I ought to be left in peace, and not ridiculed by those who seem to regard the noble stream of events much as Brindley did

rivers — mainly as something which fills their ugly canals of dreary and frequently false comment.

But, thirdly, whilst yielding the first place to philosophy, divine philosophy, as I suppose, when one comes to die, one will be glad to have done, it is desirable that the text and the comment should be kept separate and apart. The historian who loads his frail craft with that perilous and shifting freight, philosophy, adds immensely to the dangers of his voyage across the ocean of Time. Gibbon was no fool, yet it is as certain as anything can be, that had he put much of his philosophy into his history, both would have gone to the bottom long ago. And even better philosophy than Gibbon's would have been, is apt to grow mouldy in a quarter of a century, and to need three new coats of good oily rhetoric, to make it presentable to each new generation.

Gibbon was neither a great thinker nor a great man. He had neither light nor warmth. This is what, doubtless, prompted Sir James Mackintosh's famous exclamation, that you might scoop Gibbon's mind

out of Burke's without missing it. But hence, I say, the fitness of things that chained Gibbon to his library chair, and set him as his task, to write the history of the Roman Empire, whilst leaving Burke at large to illuminate the problems of his own time.

Gibbon avowedly wrote for fame. He built his History meaning it to last. He got £6,000 for writing it. The booksellers netted £60,000 by printing it. Gibbon did not mind. He knew it would be the volumes of his History, and not the banking books of his publishers, who no doubt ran their trade risks, which would keep their place upon men's shelves. He did an honest piece of work, and he has had a noble reward. Had he attempted to know the ultimate causes of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, he must have failed, egregiously, childishly. He abated his pretensions as a philosopher, was content to attempt some picture of the thing acted — of the great pageant of history — and succeeded.

WILLIAM COWPER

The large and weighty family of Gradgrinds may, from their various well-cushioned coigns of advantage, give forcible utterance to their opinions as to what are the really important things in this life; but the fact remains, distasteful as it may be to those of us who accomplish the disciplinary end of vexing our fathers' souls by other means than 'penning stanzas,' that the lives of poets, even of people who have passed for poets, eclipse in general and permanent interest the lives of other men. Whilst above the sod, these poets were often miserable enough. But charm hangs over their graves. The sternest pedestrian, even he who is most bent on making his inn by the precise path he has, with much study of the map, previously prescribed for himself, will yet often veer to the right or to the left, to visit the lonely churchyard

where, as he hears by the way, lie the ashes of some brother of the tuneful quill. It may well be that this brother's verses are not frequently on our lips. It is not the lot of every bard to make quotations. It may sometimes happen to you, as you stand mournfully surveying the little heap, to rack your brains unavailingly for so much as a single couplet ; nay, so treacherous is memory, the very title of his best-known poem may, for the moment, have slipped you. But your heart is melted all the same, and you feel it would indeed have been a churlish thing to go on your original way, unmindful of the fact that

'In yonder grave a Druid lies!'

And you have your reward. When you have reached your desired haven, and are sitting alone after dinner in the coffee-room, neat-handed Phyllis (were you not fresh from a poet's grave, a homelier name might have served her turn) having administered to your final wants, and disappeared with a pretty flounce, the ruby-coloured wine the dead poet loved, the bottled sunshine of a bygone summer, glows the

warmer in your cup as you muse over minstrels now no more, whether

'Of mighty poets in their misery dead,'

or of such a one as he whose neglected grave you have just visited.

It was a pious act, you feel, to visit that grave. You commend yourself for doing so. As the night draws on, this very simple excursion down a rutty lane and across a meadow, begins to wear the hues of devotion and of love; and unless you are very stern with yourself, the chances are that by the time you light your farthing dip, and are proceeding on your dim and perilous way to your bedroom at the end of a creaking passage, you will more than half believe you were that poet's only unselfish friend, and that he died saying so.

All this is due to the charm of poetry. Port has nothing to do with it. Indeed, as a plain matter of fact, who would drink port at a village inn? Nobody feels a bit like this after visiting the tombs of soldiers, lawyers, statesmen, or divines. These pompous places, viewed through the haze of one's recollections of the 'careers' of the

men whose names they vainly try to perpetuate, seem but, if I may slightly alter some words of old Cowley's, 'An ill show 'after a sorry sight.'

It would be quite impossible, to enumerate one half of the reasons which make poets so interesting. I will mention one, and then pass on to the subject-matter. They often serve to tell you the age of men and books. This is most interesting. There is Mr. Matthew Arnold. How impossible it would be to hazard even a wide solution of the problem of his age, but for the way he has of writing about Lord Byron! Then we know

> 'The thought of Byron, of his cry
> Stormily, sweet, his Titan agony.'

And again:

> 'What boots it now that Byron bore,
> With haughty scorn which mocked the smart,
> Through Europe to the Ætolian shore,
> The pageant of his bleeding heart?'

Ask any man born in the fifties, or even the later forties, what he thinks of Byron's Titan agony, and his features will probably wear a smile. Insist upon his giving his opinion about the pageant of the Childe's

bleeding heart, and more likely than not he will laugh outright. But, I repeat, how interesting to be able to tell the age of one distinguished poet from his way of writing of another!

So, too, with books. Miss Austen's novels are dateless things. Nobody in his senses would speak of them as 'old novels.' *John Inglesant* is an old novel, so is *Ginx's Baby*. But *Emma* is quite new, and, like a wise woman, affords few clues as to her age. But when, taking up *Sense and Sensibility*, we read Marianne Dashwood's account of her sister's lover—

'And besides all this, I am afraid, mamma, he has no real taste. Music seems scarcely to attract him, and though he admires Elinor's drawings very much, it is not the admiration of a person who can understand their worth. He admires as a lover, and not as a connoisseur. Oh, mamma! how spiritless, how tame was Edward's manner in reading last night! I felt for my sister most severely. I could hardly keep my seat to hear those beautiful lines which have frequently almost driven me wild, pronounced with

'such impenetrable calmness, such dread-'ful indifference!' 'He would certainly '[says Mrs. Dashwood] have done more 'justice to simple and elegant prose. I 'thought so, at the time, but you *would* 'give him Cowper.' 'Nay, mamma, if he 'is not to be animated by Cowper!' — when we read this, we know pretty well when Miss Austen was born. It is surely pleasant to be reminded of a time when sentimental girls used Cowper as a test of a lover's sensibility. One of our modern swains is no more likely to be condemned as a Philistine for not reading *The Task* with unction, than he is to be hung for sheep-stealing, or whipped at the cart's tail for speaking evil of constituted authorities; but the position probably still has its perils, and the Marianne Dashwoods of the hour are quite capable of putting their admirers on to *Rose Mary*, or *The Blessed Damosel*, and then flouting their insensibility. The fact, of course, is, that each generation has a way of its own, and poets are interesting because they are the mirrors in which their generation saw its own face; and what is more, they are

magic mirrors, since they retain the power of reflecting the image long after what was pleased to call itself the substance has disappeared into thin air.

There is no more interesting poet than Cowper, and hardly one the area of whose influence was greater. No man, it is unnecessary to say, courted popularity less, yet he threw a very wide net, and caught a great shoal of readers. For twenty years after the publication of *The Task* in 1785, his general popularity never flagged, and even when in the eyes of the world it was eclipsed, when Cowper became in the opinion of fierce Byronians and moss-trooping Northerners, 'a coddled Pope' and a milksop, our great, sober, Puritan middle-class took him to their warm firesides for two generations more. Some amongst these were not, it must be owned, lovers of poetry at all; they liked Cowper because he is full of a peculiar kind of religious phraseology, just as some of Burns' countrymen love Burns because he is full of a peculiar kind of strong drink called whisky. This was bad taste; but it made Cowper all the more interesting, since he thus be-

came, by a kind of compulsion, the favourite because the only poet, of all these people's children; and the children of the righteous do not wither like the green herb, neither do they beg their bread from door to door, but they live in slated houses and are known to read at times. No doubt, by the time it came to these children's children the spell was broken, and Cowper went out of fashion when Sunday travelling and play-going came in again. But his was a long run, and under peculiar conditions. Signs and tokens are now abroad, whereby the judicious are beginning to infer that there is a renewed disposition to read Cowper, and to love him, not for his faults, but for his great merits, his observing eye, his playful wit, his personal charm.

Hayley's *Life of Cowper* is now obsolete, though since it is adorned with vignettes by Blake it is prized by the curious. Hayley was a kind friend to Cowper, but he possessed, in a highly developed state, that aversion to the actual facts of a case which is unhappily so characteristic of the British biographer. Southey's *Life* is horribly long-winded and stuffed out; still, like

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Homer's *Iliad*, it remains the best. It was long excluded from strict circles because of its worldly tone, and also because it more than hinted that the Rev. John Newton was to blame for his mode of treating the poet's delusions. Its place was filled by the Rev. Mr. Grimshaw's *Life* of the poet, which is not a nice book. Mr. Benham's recent *Life*, prefixed to the cheap Globe edition of *Cowper's Poems*, is marvellously good and compressed. Mr. Goldwin Smith's account of the poet in Mr. Morley's series could not fail to be interesting, though it created in the minds of some readers a curious sensation of immense distance from the object described. Mr. Smith seemed to discern Cowper clearly enough, but as somebody very far off. This, however, may be fancy.

The wise man will not trouble the biographers. He will make for himself a short list of dates, so that he may know where he is at any particular time, and then, poking the fire and (his author notwithstanding) lighting his pipe —

'Oh, pernicious weed, whose scent the fair annoys —'

he will read Cowper's letters. There are five volumes of them in Southey's edition. It would be to exaggerate to say you wish there were fifty, but you are, at all events, well content there should be five. In the course of them Cowper will tell you the story of his own life, as it ought to be told, as it alone can be told, in the purest of English and with the sweetest of smiles. For a combination of delightful qualities, Cowper's letters have no rivals. They are playful, witty, loving, sensible, ironical, and, above all, as easy as an old shoe. So easy, indeed, that after you have read half a volume or so, you begin to think their merits have been exaggerated, and that anybody could write letters as good as Cowper's. Even so the man who never played billiards, and who sees Mr. Roberts play that game, might hastily opine that he, too, could go and do likewise.

To form anything like a fair estimate of Cowper, it is wise to ignore as much as possible his mental disease, and always to bear in mind the manner of man he naturally was. He belonged essentially to the order of wags. He was, it is easy to see,

a lover of trifling things, elegantly finished. He hated noise, contention, and the public gaze, but society he ever insisted upon.

> 'I praise the Frenchman, his remark was shrewd,
> How sweet, how passing sweet, is solitude!
> But grant me still a friend in my retreat,
> Whom I may whisper — "solitude is sweet."'

He loved a jest, a barrel of oysters, and a bottle of wine. His well-known riddle on a kiss is Cowper from top to toe:

> 'I am just two and two; I am warm, I am cold,
> And the parent of numbers that cannot be told.
> I am lawful, unlawful, a duty, a fault,
> I am often sold dear, good for nothing when bought,
> An extraordinary boon, and a matter of course,
> And yielded with pleasure when taken by force.'

Why, it is a perfect dictionary of kisses in six lines!

Had Cowper not gone mad in his thirty-second year, and been frightened out of the world of trifles, we should have had another Prior, a wittier Gay, an earlier Praed, an English La Fontaine. We do better with *The Task* and the *Lines to Mary*, but he had a light touch.

'Tis not that I design to rob
Thee of thy birthright, gentle Bob,
For thou art born sole heir and single
Of dear Mat Prior's easy jingle.
Not that I mean while thus I knit
My threadbare sentiments together,
To show my genius or my wit,
When God and you know I have neither,
Or such as might be better shown
By letting poetry alone.'

This lightness of touch, this love of trifling, never deserted Cowper, not even when the pains of hell gat hold of him, and he believed himself the especially accursed of God. In 1791, when things were very black, we find him writing to his good Dissenting friend, the Rev. William Bull ('Charissime Taurorum'), as follows: 'Homer, I say, has all my time, except a 'little that I give every day to no very 'cheering prospects of futurity. I would I 'were a Hottentot, or even a Dissenter, so 'that my views of an hereafter were more 'comfortable. But such as I am, Hope, if 'it please God, may visit even me. Should 'we ever meet again, possibly we may part 'no more. Then, if Presbyterians ever 'find their way to heaven, you and I may

'know each other in that better world, and 'rejoice in the recital of the terrible things 'that we endured in this. I will wager six-'pence with you now, that when that day 'comes you shall acknowledge my story a 'more wonderful one than yours; only 'order your executors to put sixpence in 'your mouth when they bury you, that you 'may have wherewithal to pay me.'

Whilst living in the Temple, which he did for twelve years, chiefly it would appear on his capital, he associated with a race of men, of whom report has reached us, called 'wits.' He belonged to the Nonsense Club; he wrote articles for magazines. He went to balls, to Brighton, to the play. He went once, at all events, to the gallery of the House of Commons, where he witnessed an altercation between a placeman and an alderman — two well-known types still in our midst. The placeman had misquoted Terence, and the alderman had corrected him; whereupon the ready placeman thanked the worthy alderman for teaching him Latin, and volunteered in exchange to teach the alderman English. Cowper must at this time have been a con-

siderable reader, for all through life he is to be found quoting his authors, poets, and playwrights, with an easy appositeness, all the more obviously genuine because he had no books in the country to refer to. 'I have no English History,' he writes, 'except Baker's *Chronicle*, and that I bor-'rowed three years ago from Mr. Throck-'morton.' This was wrong, but Baker's *Chronicle* (Sir Roger de Coverley's favourite Sunday reading) is not a book to be returned in a month.

After this easy fashion Cowper acquired what never left him — the style and manner of an accomplished worldling.

The story of the poet's life does not need telling; but as Owen Meredith says, probably not even for the second time, 'after all, old things are best.' Cowper was born in the rectory at Great Berkhampstead, in 1735. His mother dying when he was six years old, he was despatched to a country academy, where he was horribly bullied by one of the boys, the reality of whose persecution is proved by one terrible touch in his victim's account of it: 'I had 'such a dread of him, that I did not dare

'lift my eyes to his face. I knew him best 'by his shoe-buckle.' The odious brute! Cowper goes on to say he had forgiven him, which I can believe, but when he proceeds to ejaculate a wish to meet his persecutor again in heaven, doubt creeps in. When ten years old he was sent to Westminster, where there is nothing to show that he was otherwise than fairly happy; he took to his classics very kindly, and (so he says) excelled in cricket and football. This is evidence, but as Dr. Johnson once confessed about the evidence for the immortality of the soul, 'one would like more.' He was for some time in the class of Vincent Bourne, who, though born in 1695, and a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, ranks high amongst the Latin poets. Whether Cowper was bullied at Westminster is a matter of controversy. Bourne was bullied. About that there can be no doubt. Cowper loved him, and relates with delight how on one occasion the Duke of Richmond (Burke's Duke, I suppose) set fire to the greasy locks of this latter-day Catullus, and then, alarmed at the spread of the conflagration,

boxed his master's ears to put it out. At eighteen Cowper left Westminster, and after doing nothing (at which he greatly excelled) for nine months in the country, returned to town, and was articled to an attorney in Ely Place, Holborn, for three years. At the same time, being intended for the Bar, he was entered at the Middle, though he subsequently migrated to the Inner Temple. These three years in Ely Place Cowper fribbled away agreeably enough. He had as his desk-companion Edward Thurlow, the most tremendous of men. Hard by Ely Place is Southampton Row, and in Southampton Row lived Ashley Cowper, the poet's uncle, with a trio of affable daughters, Theodora Jane, Harriet, afterwards Lady Hesketh, and a third, who became the wife of Sir Archer Croft. According to Cowper, a great deal of giggling went on in Southampton Row. He fell in love with Theodora, and Theodora fell in love with him. He wrote her verses enough to fill a volume. She was called Delia in his lays. In 1752, his articles having expired, he took chambers in the Temple, and in 1754 was called to the Bar.

Ashley Cowper, a very little man, who used to wear a white hat lined with yellow silk, and was on that account likened by his nephew to a mushroom, would not hear of his daughter marrying her cousin; and being a determined little man, he had his own way, and the lovers were parted and saw one another no more. Theodora Cowper wore the willow all the rest of her long life. Her interest in her cousin never abated. Through her sister, Lady Hesketh, she contributed in later years generously to his support. He took the money and knew where it came from, but they never wrote to one another, nor does her name ever appear in Cowper's correspondence. She became, so it is said, morbid on the subject during her latter days, and dying twenty-four years after her lover, she bequeathed to a nephew a mysterious packet she was known to cherish. It was found to contain Cowper's love-verses.

In 1756 Cowper's father died, and the poet's patrimony proved to be a very small one. He was made a Commissioner of Bankrupts. The salary was £60 a year. He knew one solicitor, but whether he ever

had a brief is not known. He lived alone in his chambers till 1763, when, under well-known circumstances, he went raving mad, and attempted to hang himself in his bedroom, and very nearly succeeded. He was removed to Dr. Cotton's asylum, where he remained a year. This madness, which in its origin had no more to do with religion than it had with the Binomial Theorem, ultimately took the turn of believing that it was the will of God that he should kill himself, and that as he had failed to do so he was damned everlastingly. In this faith, diversified by doubt, Cowper must be said henceforth to have lived and died.

On leaving St. Albans, the poet, in order to be near his only brother, the Rev. John Cowper, Fellow of Corpus, Cambridge, and a most delightful man, had lodgings in Huntingdon; and there, one eventful Tuesday in 1765, he made the acquaintance of Mary Unwin. Mrs. Unwin's husband, a most scandalously non-resident clergyman — whom, however, Cowper composedly calls a veritable Parson Adams — was living at this time, not in his Norfolk rectory of Grimston, but contentedly enough in

Huntingdon, where he took pupils. Cowper became a lodger in the family, which consisted of the rector and his wife, a son at Cambridge, and a daughter, also one or two pupils. In 1767 Mr. Unwin was thrown from his horse and fractured his skull. Church-reformers pointed out, at the time, that had the Rector of Grimston been resident, this accident could not have occurred in Huntingdon. They then went on to say, but less convincingly, that Mr. Unwin's death was the judgment of Heaven upon him. Mr. Unwin dead, the poet and the widow moved to Olney, where they lived together for nineteen years in a tumble-down house, and on very slender means. Their attraction to Olney was in the fact that John Newton was curate-in-charge. Olney was not an ideal place by any means. Cowper and Mrs. Unwin lived in no fools' paradise, for they visited the poor and knew the manner of their lives. The inhabitants were mostly engaged in lace-making and straw-plaiting ; they were miserably poor, immoral, and drunken. There is no idyllic nonsense in Cowper's poetry.

In 1773 he had another most violent at-

tack of suicidal mania, and attempted his life more than once. Writing in 1786 to Lady Hesketh, Cowper gives her an account of his illness, of which at the time she knew nothing, as her acquaintance with her cousin was not renewed till 1785 :

'Know then, that in the year '73, the 'same scene that was acted at St. Albans 'opened upon me again at Olney, only 'covered with a still deeper shade of mel-'ancholy, and ordained to be of much 'longer duration. I believed that every-'body hated me, and that Mrs. Unwin hated 'me most of all ; was convinced that all 'my food was poisoned, together with ten 'thousand megrims of the same stamp. 'Dr. Cotton was consulted. He replied 'that he could do no more for me than 'might be done at Olney, but recommended 'particular vigilance, lest I should attempt 'my life ; a caution for which there was the 'greatest occasion. At the same time that 'I was convinced of Mrs. Unwin's aversion 'to me, I could endure no other companion. 'The whole management of me conse-'quently devolved upon her, and a terrible 'task she had ; she performed it, however,

'with a cheerfulness hardly ever equalled 'on such an occasion, and I have often 'heard her say that if ever she praised God 'in her life, it was when she found she was 'to have all the labour. She performed it 'accordingly, but as I hinted once before, 'very much to the hurt of her own consti-'tution.'

Just before this outbreak, Cowper and Mrs. Unwin had agreed to marry, but after it they felt the subject was not to be approached, and so the poor things spoke of it no more. Still, it was well they had spoken out. 'Love me, and tell me so,' is a wise maxim of behaviour.

Stupid people, themselves leading, one is glad to believe, far duller lives than Cowper and Mary Unwin, have been known to make dull, ponderous jokes about this *ménage* at Olney — its country walks, its hymn tunes, its religious exercises. But it is pleasant to note how quick Sainte Beuve, whose three papers on Cowper are amongst the glories of the *Causeries du Lundi*, is to recognise how much happiness and pleasantness was to be got out of this semi-monastic life and close social relation.

Cowper was indeed the very man for it. One can apply to him his own well-known lines about the winter season, and crown him

> 'King of intimate delights,
> Fireside enjoyments, homeborn happiness.'

No doubt he went mad at times. It was a terrible affliction. But how many men have complaints of the liver, and are as cheerful to live with as the Black Death, or Young's *Night Thoughts*. Cowper had a famous constitution. Not even Dr. James's powder, or the murderous practices of the faculty, could undermine it. Sadness is not dulness.

> 'Dear saints, it is not sorrow, as I hear,
> Nor suffering that shuts up eye and ear
> To all which has delighted them before,
> And lets us be what we were once no more!
> No! we may suffer deeply, yet retain
> Power to be moved and soothed, for all our pain,
> By what of old pleased us, and will again.
> No! 'tis the gradual furnace of the world,
> In whose hot air our spirits are upcurled
> Until they crumble, or else grow like steel,
> Which kills in us the bloom, the youth, the spring,
> Which leaves the fierce necessity to feel,
> But takes away the power — this can avail
> By drying up our joy in everything,
> To make our former pleasures all seem stale.'

I can think of no one to whom these beautiful lines of Mr. Arnold's are so exquisitely appropriate as to Cowper. Nothing could knock the humanity out of him. Solitude, sorrow, madness, found him out, threw him down and tore him, as did the devils their victims in the days of old; but when they left him for a season, he rose from his misery as sweet and as human, as interested and as interesting as ever. His descriptions of natural scenery and country-side doings are amongst his best things. He moralises enough, heaven knows! but he keeps his morality out of his descriptions. This is rather a relief after overdoses of Wordsworth's pantheism and Keats's paganism. Cowper's Nature is plain county Bucks.

> 'The sheepfold here
> Pours out its fleecy tenants o'er the glebe.
> At first progressive as a stream, they seek
> The middle field; but scattered by degrees,
> Each to his choice, soon whiten all the land.'

The man who wrote that had his eye on the object; but lest the quotation be thought too woolly by a generation which

has a passion for fine things, I will allow myself another:

'Nor rural sights alone, but rural sounds,
Exhilarate the spirit and restore
The tone of languid nature, mighty winds
That sweep the skirt of some far-spreading wood
Of ancient growth, make music not unlike
The dash of ocean on his-winding shore
. . . . . .
. . . . . of rills that slip
Through the cleft rock, and chiming as they fall
Upon loose pebbles, lose themselves at length
In matted grass, that with a livelier green
Betrays the secret of their silent course.'

In 1781 began the episode of Lady Austen. That lady was doing some small shopping in Olney, in company with her sister, the wife of a neighbouring clergyman, when our poet first beheld her. She pleased his eye. Whether in the words of one of his early poems he made free to comment on her shape I cannot say; but he hurried home and made Mrs. Unwin ask her to tea. She came. Cowper was seized with a fit of shyness, and very nearly would not go into the room. He conquered the fit, went in and swore eternal friendship. To the very end of her days Mrs. Unwin addressed

the poet, her true lover though he was, as 'Mr. Cowper.' In a week, Lady Austen and he were 'Sister Ann' and 'William' one to another. Sister Ann had a furnished house in London. She gave it up. She came to live in Olney, next door. She was pretty, she was witty, she played, she sang. She told Cowper the story of John Gilpin, she inspired his *Wreck of the Royal George*. *The Task* was written at her bidding. Day in and day out, Cowper and Lady Austen and Mrs. Unwin were together. One turns instinctively to see what Sainte Beuve has to say about Lady Austen. 'C'était Lady 'Austen, veuve d'un baronet. Cette rare 'personne était douée des plus heureux 'dons; elle n'était plus très-jeune ni dans 'la fleur de beauté; elle avait ce qui est 'mieux, une puissance d'attraction et d'en-'chantement qui tenait à la transparence 'de l'âme, une faculté de reconnaissance, 'de sensibilité émue jusqu aux larmes pour 'toute marque de bienveillance dont elle 'était l'objet. Tout en elle exprimait une 'vivacité pure, innocente et tendre. C'était 'une créature *sympathique*, et elle devait 'tout-à-fait justifier dans le cas présent ce

'mot de Bernardin de Saint-Pierre: "Il y
'"a dans la femme une gaieté légère qui
'"dissipe la tristesse de l'homme."'

That odd personage, Alexander Knox, who had what used to be called a 'primitive,' that is, a fourth-century mind, and on whom the Tractarian movement has been plausibly grandfathered, and who was (incongruously) employed by Lord Castlereagh to help through the Act of Union with Ireland, of which we have lately heard, but who remained all the time primitively unaware that any corruption was going on around him — this odd person, I say, was exercised in his mind about Lady Austen, of whom he had been reading in Hayley's *Life*. In October, 1806, he writes to Bishop Jebb in a solemn strain: 'I have 'rather a severer idea of Lady A. than I 'should wish to put into writing for publi-'cation. I almost suspect she was a very 'artful woman. But I need not enlarge.' He puts it rather differently from Sainte Beuve, but I dare say they both meant much the same thing. If Knox meant more it would be necessary to get angry with him. That Lady Austen fell in love

with Cowper and would have liked to marry him, but found Mrs. Unwin in the way, is probable enough; but where was the artfulness? Poor Cowper was no catch. The grandfather of Tractarianism would have been better employed in unmasking the corruption amongst which he had lived, than in darkly suspecting a lively lady of designs upon a penniless poet, living in the utmost obscurity, on the charity of his relatives.

But this state of things at Olney did not last very long. 'Of course not,' cackle a chorus of cynics. 'It could not!' The Historical Muse, ever averse to theory, is content to say, 'It did not,' but as she writes the words she smiles. The episode began in 1781, it ended in 1784. It became necessary to part. Cowper may have had his qualms, but he concealed them manfully and remained faithful to Mrs. Unwin —

> 'The patient flower
> Who possessed his darker hour.'

Lady Austen flew away, and afterwards, as if to prove her levity incurable, married a Frenchman. She died in 1802. English literature owes her a debt of gratitude.

Her name is writ large over much that is best in Cowper's poetry. Not indeed over the very best ; *that* bears the inscription *To Mary*. And it was right that it should be so, for Mrs. Unwin had to put up with a good deal.

The Task and *John Gilpin* were published together in 1785, and some of Cowper's old friends (notably Lady Hesketh) rallied round the now known poet once more. Lady Hesketh soon begins to fill the chair vacated by Lady Austen, and Cowper's letters to her are amongst his most delightful. Her visits to Olney were eagerly expected, and it was she who persuaded the pair to leave the place for good and all, and move to Weston, which they did in 1786. The following year Cowper went mad again, and made another most desperate attempt upon his life. Again Mary Unwin stood by the poor maniac's side, and again she stood alone. He got better, and worked away at his translation of Homer as hard and wrote letters as charming as ever. But Mrs. Unwin was pretty well done for. Cowper published his Homer by subscription, and must be pro-

nounced a dab hand in the somewhat ignoble art of collecting subscribers. I am not sure that he could not have given Pope points. Pope had a great acquaintance, but he had barely six hundred subscribers. Cowper scraped together upwards of five hundred. As a beggar he was unabashed. He quotes in one of his letters, and applies to himself patly enough, Ranger's observation in the *Suspicious Husband*, 'There is a degree of assurance 'in you modest men, that we impudent 'fellows can never arrive at!' The University of Oxford was, however, too much for him. He beat her portals in vain. She had but one answer, 'We subscribe 'to nothing.' Cowper was very angry, and called her 'a rich old vixen.' She did not mind. The book appeared in 1791. It has many merits, and remains unread.

The clouds now gathered heavily over the biography of Cowper. Mrs. Unwin had two paralytic strokes, the old friends began to torture one another. She was silent save when she was irritable, indifferent except when exacting. At last, not a day too soon, Lady Hesketh came to Wes-

ton. They were moved into Norfolk — but why prolong the tale? Mrs. Unwin died at East Dereham on the 17th of December, 1796. Thirty-one years had gone since the poet and she first met by chance in Huntingdon. Cowper himself died in April, 1800. His last days were made physically comfortable by the kindness of some Norfolk cousins, and the devotion of a Miss Perowne. But he died in wretchedness and gloom.

The *Castaway* was his last original poem :

> 'I therefore purpose not or dream
> Descanting on his fate,
> To give the melancholy theme
> A more enduring date;
> But misery still delights to trace
> Its semblance in another's case.'

Everybody interested in Cowper has of course to make out, as best he may, a picture of the poet for his own use. It is curious how sometimes little scraps of things serve to do this better than deliberate efforts. In 1800, the year of Cowper's death, his relative, a Dr. Johnson, wrote a letter to John Newton, sending

good wishes to the old gentleman, and to his niece, Miss Catlett; and added: 'Poor 'dear Mr. Cowper, oh that he were as 'tolerable as he was, even in those days 'when, dining at his house in Bucking-'hamshire with you and that lady, I could 'not help smiling to see his pleasant face 'when he said, "Miss Catlett, shall I give '"you a piece of cutlet?"' It was a very small joke indeed, and it is a very humble little quotation, but for me it has long served, in the mind's eye, for a vignette of the poet, doomed yet *debonnaire*. Romney's picture, with that frightful nightcap and eyes gleaming with madness, is a pestilent thing one would forget if one could. Cowper's pleasant face when he said, 'Miss 'Catlett, shall I give you a piece of cutlet?' is a much more agreeable picture to find a small corner for in one's memory.

GEORGE BORROW

Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson, in his delightful *Memories and Portraits*, takes occasion to tell us, amongst a good many other things of the sort, that he has a great fancy for *The Bible in Spain*, by Mr. George Borrow. He has not, indeed, read it quite so often as he has Mr. George Meredith's *Egoist*, but still he is very fond of it. It is interesting to know this, interesting, that is, to the great Clan Stevenson who owe suit and service to their liege lord; but so far as Borrow is concerned, it does not matter, to speak frankly, two straws. The author of *Lavengro*, *The Romany Rye*, *The Bible in Spain*, and *Wild Wales* is one of those kings of literature who never need to number their tribe. His personality will always secure him an attendant company, who, when he pipes, must dance. A queer company it

is too, even as was the company he kept himself, composed as it is of saints and sinners, gentle and simple, master and man, mistresses and maids ; of those who, learned in the tongues, have read everything else, and of those who have read nothing else and do not want to. People there are for whom Borrow's books play the same part as did horses and dogs for the gentleman in the tall white hat, whom David Copperfield met on the top of the Canterbury coach. 'Orses and dorgs,' said that gentleman, 'is some men's fancy. 'They are wittles and drink to me, lodging, 'wife and children, reading, writing, and 'rithmetic, snuff, tobacker, and sleep.'

Nothing, indeed, is more disagreeable, even offensive, than to have anybody else's favourite author thrust down your throat. 'Love me, love my dog,' is a maxim of behaviour which deserves all the odium Charles Lamb has heaped upon it. Still, it would be hard to go through life arm-in-arm with anyone who had stuck in the middle of *Guy Mannering*, or had bidden a final farewell to Jeannie Deans in the barn with the robbers near Gunnerly

Hill in Lincolnshire. But, oddly enough, Borrow excites no such feelings. It is quite possible to live amicably in the same house with a person who has stuck hopelessly in the middle of *Wild Wales*, and who braves it out (what impudence!) by the assertion that the book is full of things like this: 'Nothing worthy of commemora-'tion took place during the two following 'days, save that myself and family took an 'evening walk on the Wednesday up the side 'of the Berwyn, for the purpose of botanis-'ing, in which we were attended by John 'Jones. There, amongst other plants, we 'found a curious moss which our good 'friend said was called in Welsh Corn 'Carw, or deer's horn, and which he said 'the deer were very fond of. On the 'Thursday he and I started on an expe-'dition on foot to Ruthyn, distant about 'fourteen miles, proposing to return in 'the evening.'

The book *is* full of things like this, and must be pronounced as arrant a bit of book-making as ever was. But judgment is not always followed by execution, and a more mirth-provoking error can hardly

be imagined than for anyone to suppose that the admission of the fact — sometimes doubtless a damaging fact — namely, book-making, will for one moment shake the faithful in their certitude that *Wild Wales* is a delightful book; not so delightful, indeed, as *Lavengro*, *The Romany*, or *The Bible in Spain*, but still delightful because issuing from the same mint as they, stamped with the same physiognomy, and bearing the same bewitching inscription.

It is a mercy the people we love do not know how much we must forgive them. Oh the liberties they would take, the things they would do, were it to be revealed to them that their roots have gone far too deep into our soil for us to disturb them under any provocation whatsoever!

George Borrow has to be forgiven a great deal. The Appendix to *The Romany Rye* contains an assault upon the memory of Sir Walter Scott, of which every word is a blow. It is savage, cruel, unjustifiable. There is just enough of what base men call truth in it, to make it one of the most powerful bits of devil's advocacy ever penned. Had another than Borrow writ-

ten thus of the good Sir Walter, some men would travel far to spit upon his tomb. Quick and easy would have been his descent to the Avernus of oblivion. His books, torn from the shelf, should have long stood neglected in the shop of the second-hand, till the hour came for them to seek the stall, where, exposed to wind and weather, they should dolefully await the sack of the paper-merchant, whose holy office it should be to mash them into eternal pulp. But what rhodomontade is this! No books are more, in the vile phrase of the craft, 'esteemed' than Borrow's. The prices demanded for the early editions already impinge upon the absurd, and are steadily rising. The fact is, there is no use blinking it, mankind cannot afford to quarrel with George Borrow, and will not do so. It is bad enough what he did, but when we remember that whatever he had done, we must have forgiven him all the same, it is just possible to thank Heaven (feebly) that it was no worse. He might have robbed a church!

Borrow is indeed one of those lucky men who, in Bagehot's happy phrase,

'keep their own atmosphere,' and as a consequence, when in the destined hour the born Borrovian — for men are born Borrovians, not made — takes up a volume of him, in ten minutes (unless it be *Wild Wales*, and then twenty must be allowed) the victory is won; down tumbles the standard of Respectability which through a virtuous and perhaps long life has braved the battle and the breeze; up flutters the lawless pennon of the Romany Chal, and away skims the reader's craft over seas, hitherto untravelled, in search of adventures, manifold and marvellous, nor in vain.

If one was in search of a single epithet most properly descriptive of Borrow's effect upon his reader, perhaps it would best be found in the word 'contagious.' He is one of the most 'catching' of our authors. The most inconsistent of men, he compels those who are born subject to his charm to share his inconsistencies. He was an agent of the Bible Society, and his extraordinary adventures in Spain were encountered, so at least his title-page would have us believe, in an attempt to

circulate the Scriptures in the Peninsula. He was a sound Churchman, and would have nothing to do with Dissent, even in Wild Wales, but he had also a passion for the ring. Mark his devastations. It is as bad as the pestilence. A gentle lady, bred amongst the Quakers, a hater of physical force, with eyes brimful of mercy, was lately heard to say, in heightened tones, at a dinner-table, where the subject of momentary conversation was a late prize-fight: 'Oh! pity was it that ever corruption 'should have crept in amongst them.' 'Amongst whom?' inquired her immediate neighbour. 'Amongst the bruisers of 'England,' was the terrific rejoinder. Deep were her blushes — and yet how easy to forgive her! The gentle lady spoke as one does in dreams; for, you must know, she was born a Borrovian, and only that afternoon had read for the first time the famous twenty-fifth chapter of *Lavengro:*

'But what a bold and vigorous aspect 'pugilism wore at that time! And the 'great battle was just then coming off; 'the day had been decided upon, and the 'spot — a convenient distance from the old

'town (Norwich); and to the old town were 'now flocking the bruisers of England, men 'of tremendous renown. Let no one sneer 'at the bruisers of England; what were the 'gladiators of Rome, or the bull-fighters of 'Spain, in its palmiest days, compared to 'England's bruisers? Pity that ever cor-'ruption should have crept in amongst 'them — but of that I wish not to talk. 'There they come, the bruisers from far 'London, or from wherever else they might 'chance to be at the time, to the great ren-'dezvous in the old city; some came one 'way, some another: some of tip-top repu-'tation came with peers in their chariots, 'for glory and fame are such fair things 'that even peers are proud to have those 'invested therewith by their sides; others 'came in their own gigs, driving their own 'bits of blood; and I heard one say: "I '"have driven through at a heat the whole '"hundred and eleven miles, and only '"stopped to bait twice!" Oh! the blood 'horses of old England! but they too have 'had their day — for everything beneath 'the sun there is a season and a time. . . . 'So the bruisers of England are come to

'be present at the grand fight speedily
'coming off; there they are met in the
'precincts of the old town, near the field
'of the chapel, planted with tender saplings
'at the restoration of sporting Charles,
'which are now become venerable elms,
'as high as many a steeple; there they
'are met at a fitting rendezvous, where a
'retired coachman with one leg keeps an
'hotel and a bowling-green. I think I now
'see them upon the bowling-green, the men
'of renown, amidst hundreds of people with
'no renown at all, who gaze upon them
'with timid wonder. Fame, after all, is a
'glorious thing, though it lasts only for a
'day. There's Cribb, the champion of
'England, and perhaps the best man in
'England — there he is, with his huge,
'massive figure, and face wonderfully like
'that of a lion. There is Belcher the
'younger — not the mighty one, who is
'gone to his place, but the Teucer Belcher,
'the most scientific pugilist that ever en-
'tered a ring, only wanting strength to be
'— I won't say what. . . . But how shall
'I name them all? They were there by
'dozens, and all tremendous in their way.

'There was Bulldog Hudson and fearless 'Scroggins, who beat the conqueror of 'Sam the Jew. There was Black Rich- 'mond — no, he was not there, but I knew 'him well. He was the most dangerous 'of blacks, even with a broken thigh. 'There was Purcell, who could never con- 'quer till all seemed over with him. There 'was — what! shall I name thee last? Ay, 'why not? I believe that thou art the last 'of all that strong family still above the 'sod, where may'st thou long continue — 'true piece of English stuff, Tom of Bed- 'ford, sharp as Winter, kind as Spring!'

No wonder the gentle lady was undone. It is as good as Homer.

Diderot, it will be remembered, once wrote a celebrated eulogium on Richardson, which some have thought exaggerated, because he says in it that, on the happening of certain events, in themselves improbable, he would keep *Clarissa* and *Sir Charles* on the same shelf with the writings of Moses, Homer, Euripides, and Sophocles. Why a literary man should not be allowed to arrange his library as he chooses, without being exposed to so awful

a charge as that of exaggeration, it is hard to say. But no doubt the whole eulogium is pitched in too high a key for modern ears; still, it contains sensible remarks, amongst them this one: that he had observed that in a company where the writings of Richardson were being read, either privately or aloud, the conversation became at once interesting and animated. Books cannot be subjected to a truer test. Will they bear talking about? A parcel of friends can talk about Borrow's books for ever. The death of his father, as told in the last chapter of *Lavengro*. Is there anything of the kind more affecting in the library? Somebody is almost sure to say, 'Yes, the death of Le Fevre in *Tristram Shandy*.' A third, who always (provoking creature) likes best what she read last, will wax eloquent over the death of the little princess in Tolstoi's great book. The character-sketch of Borrow's elder brother, the self-abnegating artist who declined to paint the portrait of the Mayor of Norwich because he thought a friend of his could do it better, suggests De Quincey's marvellous sketch of his elder brother.

And then, what about Benedict Moll, Joey the dog-fancier of Westminster, and that odious wretch the London publisher? You had need to be a deaf mute to avoid taking part in a conversation like this. Who was Mary Fulcher? All the clocks in the parish will have struck midnight before that question has been answered. It is not to take a gloomy view of the world to say that there are few pleasanter things in it than a good talk about George Borrow.

For invalids and delicate persons leading retired lives, there are no books like Borrow's. Lassitude and Languor, horrid hags, simply pick up their trailing skirts and scuttle out of any room into which he enters. They cannot abide him. A single chapter of Borrow is air and exercise; and, indeed, the exercise is not always gentle. 'I feel,' said an invalid, laying down *The Bible in Spain*, as she spoke, upon the counterpane, 'as if I had been gesticulat-'ing violently for the space of two hours.' She then sank into deep sleep, and is now hale and hearty. Miss Martineau, in her *Life in the Sick Room*, invokes a blessing upon the head of Christopher North. But

there were always those who refused to believe in Miss Martineau's illness, and certainly her avowed perference for the man whom Macaulay in his wrath, writing to Napier in Edinburgh, called 'your 'grog-drinking, cock-fighting, cudgel-play-'ing Professor of Moral Philosophy,' is calculated to give countenance to this unworthy suspicion. It was an odd taste for an invalid who, whilst craving for vigour, must necessarily hate noise. Borrow is a vigorous writer, Wilson a noisy one. It was, however, his *Recreations* and not the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, that Miss Martineau affected. Still the *Recreations* are noisy too, and Miss Martineau must find her best excuse, and I am determined to find an excuse for her--for did she not write the *Feats on the Fiord?*--in the fact, that when she wrote her *Life in the Sick Room* (a dear little book to read when in rude health), Borrow had published nothing of note. Had he done so, she would have been of my way of thinking.

How much of Borrow is true and how much is false, is one of those questions which might easily set all mankind by the

ears, but for the pleasing circumstance that it does not matter a dump. Few things are more comical than to hear some douce body, unread in Borrow, gravely inquiring how far his word may be relied upon. The sole possible response takes the exceptionable shape of loud peals of laughter. And yet, surely, it is a most reasonable question, or query, as the Scotch say. So it is; but after you have read your author you won't ask it — you won't want to. The reader can believe what he likes, and as much as he likes. In the old woman on London Bridge and her convict son, in the man in black (how unlike Goldsmith's!), in the *Flaming Tinman*, in Ursula, the wife of Sylvester. There is but one person in whom you must believe, every hour of the day and of the night, else are you indeed unworthy — you must believe in Isopel Berners. A stranger and more pathetic figure than she is not to be seen flitting about in the great shadow-dance men call their life. Born and bred though she was in a workhouse, where she learnt to read and sew, fear God, and take her own part, a nobler, more

lovable woman never crossed man's path. Her introduction to her historian was quaint. 'Before I could put myself on 'my guard, she struck me a blow on the 'face, which had nearly brought me to the 'ground.' Alas, poor Isopel! Borrow returned the blow, a deadlier, fiercer blow, aimed not at the face but at the heart. Of their life in the Dingle let no man speak; it must be read in the last chapters of *Lavengro*, and the early ones of *The Romany Rye*. Borrow was certainly irritating. One longs to shake him. He was what children call 'a tease.' He teased poor Isopel with his confounded philology. Whether he simply made a mistake, or whether the girl was right in her final surmise, that he was 'at the root mad,' who can say? He offered her his hand, but at too late a stage in the proceedings. Isopel Berners left the Dingle to go to America, and we hear of her no more. That she lived to become a happy 'housemother,' and to start a line of brave men and chaste women, must be the prayer of all who know what it is to love a woman they have never seen. Of the strange

love-making that went on in the Dingle no idea can or ought to be given save from the original.

'Thereupon I descended into the Dingle. 'Belle was sitting before the fire, at which 'the kettle was boiling. "Were you wait-'"ing for me?" I inquired. "Yes," said 'Belle, "I thought you would come, and '"I waited for you." "That was very '"kind," said I. "Not half so kind," said 'she, "as it was of you to get everything '"ready for me in the dead of last night, '"when there was scarcely a chance of my '"coming." The tea-things were brought 'forward, and we sat down. "Have you '"been far?" said Belle. "Merely to '"that public-house," said I, "to which '"you directed me on the second day of '"our acquaintance." "Young men should '"not make a habit of visiting public-'"houses," said Belle; "they are bad '"places." "They may be so to some '"people," said I, "but I do not think the '"worst public-house in England could do '"me any harm." "Perhaps you are so '"bad already," said Belle with a smile, '"that it would be impossible to spoil

'"you." "How dare you catch at my
'"words?" said I; "come, I will make
'"you pay for doing so — you shall have
'"this evening the longest lesson in
'"Armenian which I have yet inflicted
'"upon you." "You may well say in-
'"flicted," said Belle, "but pray spare
'"me. I do not wish to hear anything
'"about Armenian, especially this even-
'"ing." "Why this evening?" said I.
'Belle made no answer. "I will not spare
'"you," said I; "this evening I intend to
'"make you conjugate an Armenian verb."
'"Well, be it so," said Belle, "for this
'"evening you shall command." "To
'"command is hramahyel," said I. "Ram
'"her ill indeed," said Belle, "I do not
'"wish to begin with that." "No," said
'I, "as we have come to the verbs we will
'"begin regularly: hramahyel is a verb of
'"the second conjugation. We will begin
'"with the first." "First of all, tell me,"
'said Belle, "what a verb is?" "A part
'"of speech," said I, "which, according to
'"the dictionary, signifies some action or
'"passion; for example, 'I command you,
'"'or I hate you.'" "I have given you

'"no cause to hate me," said Belle, look-
'ing me sorrowfully in the face.

'"I was merely giving two examples,"
'said I, "and neither was directed at you.
'"In those examples, to command and
'"hate are verbs. Belle, in Armenian
'"there are four conjugations of verbs;
'"the first ends in al, the second in yel,
'"the third in oul, and the fourth in il.
'"Now, have you understood me?"

'"I am afraid, indeed, it will all end ill,"
'said Belle. "Hold your tongue!" said
'I, "or you will make me lose my pa-
'"tience." "You have already made me
'"nearly lose mine," said Belle. "Let us
'"have no unprofitable interruptions," said
'I. "The conjugations of the Armenian
'"verbs are neither so numerous nor so
'"difficult as the declensions of the nouns.
'"Hear that and rejoice. Come, we will
'"begin with the verb hntal, a verb of the
'"first conjugation, which signifies to re-
'"joice. Come along: hntam, I rejoice;
'"hyntas, thou rejoicest. Why don't you
'"follow, Belle?"

'"I am sure I don't rejoice, whatever
'"you may do," said Belle. "The chief

‘“difficulty, Belle,” said I, “that I find in
‘“teaching you the Armenian grammar
‘“proceeds from your applying to your-
‘“self and me every example I give. Re-
‘“joice, in this instance, is merely an
‘“example of an Armenian verb of the
‘“first conjugation, and has no more to
‘“do with your rejoicing than lal, which is
‘“also a verb of the first conjugation, and
‘“which signifies to weep, would have to
‘“do with your weeping, provided I made
‘“you conjugate it. Come along: hntam,
‘“I rejoice; hntas, thou rejoicest; hnta,
‘“he rejoices; hntamk, we rejoice. Now
‘“repeat those words.” “I can't bear
‘“this much longer,” said Belle. “Keep
‘“yourself quiet,” said I. “I wish to be
‘“gentle with you, and to convince you,
‘“we will skip hntal, and also, for the
‘“present, verbs of the first conjugation,
‘“and proceed to the second. Belle, I
‘“will now select for you to conjugate the
‘“prettiest verb in Armenian, not only of
‘“the second, but also of all the four con-
‘“jugations. That verb is siriel. Here
‘“is the present tense: siriem, sirics,
‘“sire, siriemk, sirèk, sirien. Come on,

'"Belle, and say siriem." Belle hesi-
'tated. "Pray oblige me, Belle, by say-
'"ing siriem." Belle still appeared to
'hesitate. "You must admit, Belle, that
'"it is softer than hntam." "It is so,"
'said Belle, "and to oblige you I will say
'"siriem." "Very well indeed, Belle,"
'said I, "and now to show you how
'"verbs act upon pronouns in Armenian,
'"I will say siriem zkiez. Please to repeat
'"siriem zkiez." "Siriem zkiez," said
'Belle; "that last word is very hard to
'"say." "Sorry that you think so, Belle,"
'said I. "Now, please to say siriá zis."
'Belle did so. "Exceedingly well," said
'I. "Now say girani thè sireir zis."
'"Girane thè sireir zis," said Belle. "Cap-
'"ital!" said I. "You have now said I
'"love you—love me. Ah! would that
'"you would love me!"

'"And I have said all these things?"
'said Belle. "Yes," said I. "You have
'"said them in Armenian." "I would
'"have said them in no language that I
'"understood," said Belle. "And it was
'"very wrong of you to take advantage of
'"my ignorance, and make me say such

'"things!" "Why so?" said I. "If you
'"said them, I said them too."'

'Was ever woman in this humour wooed?'

It is, I believe, the opinion of the best critics that *The Bible in Spain* is Borrow's masterpiece. It very likely is so. At the present moment I feel myself even more than usually disqualified for so grave a consideration by my over-powering delight in its dear, deluding title. A quarter of a century ago, in all decent homes, a boy's reading was, by the stern decree of his elders, divided rigorously, though at the same time it must be admitted crudely, into Sunday books and week-day books. 'What have you got there?' has before now been an inquiry addressed on a Sunday afternoon to some youngster, suspiciously engrossed in a book. 'Oh, *The* '*Bible in Spain*,' would be the reply. 'It 'is written by a Mr. Borrow, you know, and 'it is all about'—(then the title-page would serve its turn) 'his attempts "to circulate '"the Scriptures in the Peninsula!"' 'In-'deed! Sounds most suitable,' answers the gulled authority, some foolish sisters'-

governess or the like illiterate, and moves off. And then the happy boy would wriggle in his chair, and, as if thirsting to taste the first fruits of his wile, hastily seek out a streaky page, and there read, for perhaps the hundredth time, the memorable words:

'"Good are the horses of the Moslems," 'said my old friend; "where will you find '"such? They will descend rocky moun- '"tains at full speed, and neither trip nor '"fall; but you must be cautious with the '"horses of the Moslems, and treat them '"with kindness, for the horses of the Mos- '"lems are proud, and they like not being '"slaves. When they are young and first '"mounted, jerk not their mouths with '"your bit, for be sure if you do, they will '"kill you; sooner or later, you will perish '"beneath their feet. Good are our horses, '"and good our riders. Yea, very good '"are the Moslems at mounting the horse; '"who are like them? I once saw a Frank '"rider compete with a Moslem on this '"beach, and at first the Frank rider had '"it all his own way and he passed the '"Moslem, but the course was long, very '"long, and the horse of the Frank rider,

'"which was a Frank horse also, panted;
'"but the horse of the Moslem panted not,
'"for he was a Moslem also, and the Mos-
'"lem rider at last gave a cry, and the
'"horse sprang forward and he overtook
'"the Frank horse, and then the Moslem
'"rider stood up in his saddle. How did
'"he stand? Truly he stood on his head,
'"and these eyes saw him; he stood on his
'"head in the saddle as he passed the Frank
'"rider; and he cried ha! ha! as he passed
'"the Frank rider; and the Moslem horse
'"cried ha! ha! as he passed the Frank
'"breed, and the Frank lost by a far dis-
'"tance. Good are the Franks, good their
'"horses; but better are the Moslems, and
'"better the horses of the Moslems."'

That boy, as he lay curled up in his chair, doting over the enchanted page, knew full well, else had he been no Christian boy, that it was not a Sunday book which was making his eyes start out of his head; yet, reckless, he cried, 'ha! ha!' and read on, and as he read he blessed the madcap Borrow for having called his romance by the sober-sounding, propitiatory title of *The Bible in Spain!*

'Creeds pass, rites change, no altar standeth whole.'

In a world of dust and ashes it is a foolish thing to prophesy immortality, or even a long term of years, for any fellow-mortal. Good luck does not usually pursue such predictions. England can boast few keener, better-qualified critics than that admirable woman, Mrs. Barbauld, or, not to dock her of her accustomed sizings, Mrs. Anna Lætitia Barbauld. And yet what do we find her saying? 'The young 'may melt into tears at *Julia Mandeville*, 'and *The Man of Feeling*, the romantic 'will shudder at *Udolpho*, but those of 'mature age who know what human nature 'is, will take up again and again Dr. 'Moore's *Zeluco*.' One hates to contradict a lady like Mrs. Barbauld, or to speak in terms of depreciation of any work of Mrs. Radcliffe's, whose name is still as a pleasant savour in the nostrils; therefore I will let *Udolpho* alone. As for Henry Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling*, what was good enough for Sir Walter Scott ought surely to be good enough for us, most days. I am no longer young, and cannot therefore be expected to melt into tears at *Julia*

Mandeville, but here my toleration is exhausted. Dr. Moore's *Zeluco* is too much; maturity has many ills to bear, but repeated perusals of this work cannot fairly be included amongst them.

Still, though prediction is to be avoided, it is impossible to feel otherwise than very cheerful about George Borrow. His is a good life. Anyhow, he will outlive most people, and that at all events is a comfort.

CARDINAL NEWMAN

I

THERE are some men whose names are inseparably and exclusively associated with movements; there are others who are for ever united in human memories with places; it is the happy fortune of the distinguished man whose name is at the top of this page to be able to make good both titles to an estate in our minds and hearts; for whilst his fierce intellectual energy made him the leader of a great movement, his rare and exquisite tenderness has married his name to a lovely place. Whenever men's thoughts dwell upon the revival of Church authority in England and America during this century, they will recall the Vicar of St. Mary's, Oxford, who lived to become a Cardinal of Rome, and whenever the lover of all things that are quiet, and gentle, and

true in life, and literature, visits Oxford he will find himself wondering whether snapdragon still grows outside the windows of the rooms in Trinity, where once lived the author of the *Apologia*.

The Rev. John Wesley was a distinguished man, if ever there was one, and his name is associated with a movement certainly as remarkable as, and a great deal more useful than, the one connected with the name of Newman. Wesley's great missionary tours in Devon and Cornwall, and the wild, remote parts of Lancashire, lack no single element of sublimity. To this day the memories of those apostolic journeys are green and precious, and a source of strength and joy: the portrait of the eager preacher hangs up in almost every miner's cottage, whilst his name is pronounced with reverence by a hundred thousand lips. 'You seem a very temperate 'people here,' once observed a thirsty pedestrian (who was, indeed, none other than the present writer) to a Cornish miner, 'how 'did it happen?' He replied solemnly, raising his cap, 'There came a man amongst 'us once, and his name was John Wesley.'

Wesley was an Oxford man, but he is not much in men's thoughts as they visit that city of enchantment. Why is this? It is because, great as Wesley was, he lacked charm. As we read his diaries and letters, we are interested, we are moved, but we are not pleased. Now, Oxford pleases and charms. Therefore it is, that when we allow ourselves a day in her quadrangles we find ourselves thinking of Dr. Newman, and his Trinity snap-dragon, and how the Rev. William James, 'some time in the year '1823,' taught him the doctrine of Apostolic Succession in the course of a walk round Christchurch Meadow, rather than of Wesley and his prayer-meetings at Lincoln, which were proclaimed by the authorities as savouring of sedition.

A strong personal attachment of the kind which springs up from reading an author, which is distilled through his pages, and turns his foibles, even his follies, into pleasant things we would not for the world have altered, is apt to cause the reader, who is thus affected, to exaggerate the importance of any intellectual movement with which the author happened to be associated.

There are, I know, people who think this is notably so in Dr. Newman's case. Crusty men are to be met with, who rudely say they have heard enough of the Oxford movement, and that the time is over for penning ecstatic paragraphs about Dr. Newman's personal appearance in the pulpit at St. Mary's. I think these crusty people are wrong. The movement was no doubt an odd one in some of its aspects — it wore a very academic air indeed; and to be academic is to be ridiculous, in the opinion of many. Our great Northern towns lived their grimy lives amidst the whirl of their machinery, quite indifferent to the movement. Our huge Nonconformist bodies knew no more of the University of Oxford in those days, than they did of the University of Tübingen. This movement sent no missionaries to the miners, and its tracts were not of the kind that are served suddenly upon you in the streets like legal process, but were, in fact, bulky treatises stuffed full of the dead languages. London, of course, heard about the movement, and, so far as she was not tickled by the comicality of the notion of anything really important happening

outside her cab-radius, was irritated by it. Mr. Henry Rogers poked heavy fun at it in the *Edinburgh Review*. Mr. Isaac Taylor wrote two volumes to prove that ancient Christianity was a drivelling and childish superstition, and in the opinion of some pious Churchmen succeeded in doing so. But for the most part people left the movement alone, unless they happened to be Bishops or very clerically connected. 'The bishops,' says Dr. Newman, 'began charging against 'us.' But bishops' charges are amongst the many seemingly important things that do not count in England. It is said to be the duty of an archdeacon to read his bishop's charge, but it is undoubted law that a mandamus will not be granted to compel him to do so.

But notwithstanding this aspect of the case, it was a genuine thought-movement in propagating which these long-coated parsons, with their dry jokes, strange smiles, and queer notions were engaged. They used to drive about the country in gigs, from one parsonage to another, and leave their tracts behind them. They were not concerned with the flocks — their message was to the shepherds. As for the

Dissenters, they had nothing to say to them, except that their very presence in a parish was a plenary argument for the necessity of the movement.

The Tractarians met with the usual fortune of those who peddle new ideas. Some rectors did not want to be primitive — more did not know what it meant; but enough were found pathetically anxious to read a meaning into their services and offices, to make it plain that the Tracts really were 'for' and not 'against' the times.

The great plot, plan, or purpose, call it what you will, of the Tractarian movement was to make Churchmen believe with a personal conviction that the Church of England was not a mere National Institution, like the House of Commons or the game of cricket, but a living branch of that Catholic Church which God had from the beginning, endowed with sacramental gifts and graces, with a Priesthood apostolically descended, with a Creed, precise and specific, which it was the Church's duty to teach, and man's to believe, and with a ritual and discipline to be practised and maintained, with daily piety and entire submission.

These were new ideas in 1833. When Dr. Newman was ordained in 1824, he has told us, he did not look on ordination as a sacramental rite, nor did he ascribe to baptism any supernatural virtue.

It cannot be denied that the Tractarians had their work before them. But they had forces on their side.

It is always pleasant to rediscover the meaning of words and forms which have been dulled by long usage. This is why etymology is so fascinating. By the natural bent of our minds we are lovers of whatever things are true and real. We hanker after facts. To get a grip of reality is a pleasure so keen — most of our faith is so desperate a 'make-believe,' that it is not to be wondered at that pious folk should have been found who rejoiced to be told that what they had been saying and doing all the years of their lives really had a meaning and a history of its own. One would have to be very unsympathetic not to perceive that the time we are speaking of must have been a very happy one for many a devout soul. The dry bones lived — formal devotions were turned into joyous acts of faith

and piety. The Church became a Living Witness to the Truth. She could be interrogated — she could answer. The old calendar was revived, and Saint's Day followed Saint's Day, and season season, in the sweet procession of the Christian Year. Pretty girls got up early, made the sign of the Cross, and, unscared by devils, tripped across the dewy meadows to Communion. Grave men read the Fathers, and found themselves at home in the Fourth Century.

A great writer had, so it appears, all unconsciously prepared the way for this Neo-Catholicism. Dr. Newman has never forgotten to pay tribute to Sir Walter Scott.

Sir Walter's work has proved to be of so permanent a character, his insight into all things Scotch so deep and true, and his human worth and excellence so rare and noble, that it has hardly been worth while to remember the froth and effervescence he at first occasioned; but that he did create a movement in the Oxford direction is certain. He made the old Catholic times interesting. He was not indeed, like the Tractarians, a man of 'primitive' mind;

but he was romantic, and it all told. For this we have the evidence not only of Dr. Newman (a very nice observer), but also of the delightful, the bewitching, the never sufficiently-to-be-praised George Borrow — Borrow, the Friend of Man, at whose bidding lassitude and languor strike their tents and flee; and health and spirits, adventure and human comradeship, take up the reins of life, whistle to the horses, and away you go!

Borrow has indeed, in the Appendix to the *Romany Rye*, written of Sir Walter after a fashion for which I hope he has been forgiven. A piece of invective more terrible, more ungenerous, more savagely and exultingly cruel, is nowhere to be found. I shudder when I think of it. Had another written it, nothing he ever wrote should be in the same room with the *Heart of Midlothian*, *Redgauntlet*, and *The Antiquary*. I am not going to get angry with George Borrow. I say at once — I cannot afford it. But neither am I going to quote from the Appendix. God forbid! I can find elsewhere what will suit my purpose just as well. Readers of

Lavengro will remember the Man in Black. It is hard to forget him, the scandalous creature, or his story of the ironmonger's daughter at Birmingham 'who 'screeches to the piano the Lady of the 'Lake's hymn to the Virgin Mary, always 'weeps when Mary Queen of Scots is men-'tioned, and fasts on the anniversary of 'the death of that very wise martyr, 'Charles I. Why, said the Man in Black, 'I would engage to convert such an idiot 'to popery in a week, were it worth my 'trouble. O Cavaliere Gualtereo, avete 'fatto molto in favore della Santa Sede.'

Another precursor was Coleridge, who (amongst other things) called attention to the writings of the earlier Anglican divines — some of whom were men of primitive tempers and Catholic aspirations. Andrews and Laud, Jackson, Bull, Hammond and Thorndyke — sound divines to a man — found the dust brushed off them. The second-hand booksellers, a wily and observant race, became alive to the fact that though Paley and Warburton, Horsley and Hoadley, were not worth the brown paper they came wrapped up in, seventeenth-

century theology would bear being marked high.

Thus was the long Polar Winter that had befallen Anglican theology broken up, and the icebergs began moving about after a haphazard and even dangerous fashion — but motion is always something.

What has come to the Movement? It is hard to say. Its great leader has written a book of fascinating interest to prove that it was not a genuine Anglican movement at all; that it was foreign to the National Church, and that neither was its life derived from, nor was its course in the direction of, the National Church. But this was after he himself had joined the Church of Rome. Nobody, however, ventured to contradict him, nor is this surprising when we remember the profusion of argument and imagery with which he supported his case.

A point was reached, and then things were allowed to drop. The Church of Rome received some distinguished converts with her usual well-bred composure, and gave them little things to do in their new places. The Tracts for the Times, neatly

bound, repose on many shelves. Tract No. 90, that fierce bomb-shell which once scattered confusion through clerical circles, is perhaps the only bit of Dr. Newman's writing one does not, on thinking of, wish to sit down at once to re-read. The fact is that the movement, as a movement with a terminus *ad quem*, was fairly beaten by a power fit to be matched with Rome herself — John Bullism. John Bull could not be got to assume a Catholic demeanour. When his judges denied that the grace of Baptism was a dogma of his faith, Bull, instead of behaving as did the people of Milan when Ambrose was persecuted by an Arian Government, was hugely pleased, clapped his thigh, and exclaimed, through the mouth of Lord John Russell, that the ruling was 'sure to give general satisfaction,' as indeed it did.

The work of the movement can still be seen in the new spirit that has descended upon the Church of England and in the general heightening of Church principles; but the movement itself is no longer to be seen, or much of the temper or modes of thought of the Tractarians. The High

Church clergyman of to-day is no Theologian — he is an Opportunist. The Tractarian took his stand upon Antiquity — he laboured his points, he was always ready to prove his Rule of Faith and to define his position. His successor, though he has appropriated the results of the struggle, does not trouble to go on waging it. He is as a rule no great reader — you may often search his scanty library in vain for the works of Bishop Jackson. Were you to ask for them, it is quite possible he would not know to what bishop of that name you were referring. He is as hazy about the Hypostatic Union as are many laymen about the Pragmatic Sanction. He is all for the People and for filling his Church. The devouring claims of the Church of Rome do not disturb his peace of mind. He thinks it very rude of her to dispute the validity of his orders — but, then, foreigners are rude! And so he goes on his hard-working way, with his high doctrines and his early services, and has neither time nor inclination for those studies that lend support to his priestly pretensions.

This temper of mind has given us peace

in our time, and has undoubtedly promoted the cause of Temperance and other good works; but some day or another the old questions will have to be gone into again, and the Anglican claim to be a Church, Visible, Continuous, Catholic, and Gifted, investigated — probably for the last time.

Cynics may declare that it will be but a storm in a teacup — a dispute in which none but 'women, priests, and peers' will be called upon to take part — but it is not an obviously wise policy to be totally indifferent to what other people are thinking about — simply because your own thoughts are running in other directions.

But all this is really no concern of mine. My object is to call attention to Dr. Newman's writings from a purely literary point of view.

The charm of Dr. Newman's style necessarily baffles description: as well might one seek to analyse the fragrance of a flower, or to expound in words the jumping of one's heart when a beloved friend unexpectedly enters the room. It is hard to describe charm. Mr. Matthew Arnold, who is a poet, gets near it:

'And what but gentleness untired,
And what but noble feeling warm,
Wherever seen, howe'er inspired,
Is grace, is charm?'

One can of course heap on words. Dr. Newman's style is pellucid, it is animated, it is varied; at times icy cold, it oftener glows with a fervent heat; it employs as its obedient and well-trained servant, a vast vocabulary, and it does so always with the ease of the educated gentleman, who by a sure instinct ever avoids alike the ugly pedantry of the book-worm, the forbidding accents of the lawyer, and the stiff conceit of the man of scientific theory. Dr. Newman's sentences sometimes fall upon the ear like well-considered and final judgments, each word being weighed and counted out with dignity and precision; but at other times the demeanour and language of the judge are hastily abandoned, and, substituted for them, we encounter the impetuous torrent —the captivating rhetoric, the brilliant imagery, the frequent examples, the repetition of the same idea in different words, of the eager and accomplished advocate addressing men of like passions with himself.

Dr. Newman always aims at effect, and never misses it. He writes as an orator speaks, straight at you. His object is to convince, and to convince by engaging your attention, exciting your interest, enlivening your fancy. It is not his general practice to address the pure reason. He knows (he well may) how little reason has to do with men's convictions. 'I do not want,' he says, 'to 'be converted by a smart syllogism.' In another place he observes: 'The heart is 'commonly reached not through the reason '— but through the imagination by means 'of direct impressions, by the testimony of 'facts and events, by history and by de-'scription. Persons influence us, voices 'melt us, books subdue us, deeds inflame 'us.' I have elsewhere ventured upon a comparison between Burke and Newman. Both men, despite their subtlety and learning and super-refinement, their love of fine points and their splendid capacity for stating them in language so apt as to make one's admiration breathless, took very broad, common-sense, matter-of-fact views of humanity, and ever had the ordinary man and woman in mind as they spoke

and wrote. Politics and Religion existed in their opinion, for the benefit of plain folk, for Richard and for Jane, or, in other words, for living bundles of hopes and fears, doubts and certainties, prejudices and passions. Anarchy and Atheism are in their opinion the two great enemies of the Human Race. How are they to be frustrated and confounded, men and women being what they are? Dr. Newman, recluse though he is, has always got the world stretched out before him; its unceasing roar sounds in his ear as does the murmur of ocean in the far inland shell. In one of his Catholic Sermons, the sixth of his Discourses to Mixed Congregations, there is a gorgeous piece of rhetoric in which he describes the people looking in at the shop-windows and reading advertisements in the newspapers. Many of his pages positively glow with light and heat and colour. One is at times reminded of Fielding. And all this comparing, and distinguishing, and illustrating, and appealing, and describing, is done with the practised hand of a consummate writer and orator. He is as subtle as Gladstone, and as moving as Ers-

kine; but whereas Gladstone is occasionally clumsy and Erskine is frequently crude, Newman is never clumsy, Newman is never crude, but always graceful, always mellowed.

Humour he possesses in a marked degree. A quiet humour, of course, as befits his sober profession and the gravity of the subjects on which he loves to discourse. It is not the humour that is founded on a lively sense of the incongruous. This kind, though the most delightful of all, is apt, save in the hands of the great masters, the men whom you can count upon your fingers, to wear a slightly professional aspect. It happens unexpectedly, but all the same we expect it to happen, and we have got our laughter ready. Newman's quiet humour always takes us unawares, and is accepted gratefully, partly on account of its intrinsic excellence, and partly because we are glad to find that the

'Pilgrim pale with Paul's sad girdle bound'

has room for mirth in his heart.

In sarcasm Dr. Newman is pre-eminent. Here his extraordinary powers of compres-

sion, which are little short of marvellous in one who has also such a talent for expansion, come to his aid and enable him to squeeze into a couple of sentences, pleadings, argument, judgment, and execution. Had he led the secular life, and adopted a Parliamentary career, he would have been simply terrific, for his weapons of offence are both numerous and deadly. His sentences stab — his invective destroys. The pompous high-placed imbecile mouthing his platitudes, the wordy sophister with his oven full of half-baked thoughts, the ill-bred rhetorician with his tawdry aphorisms, the heartless hate-producing satirist, would have gone down before his sword and spear. But God was merciful to these sinners : Newman became a Priest and they Privy Councillors.

And lastly, all these striking qualities and gifts float about in a pleasant atmosphere. As there are some days even in England when merely to go out and breathe the common air is joy, and when, in consequence, that grim tyrant, our bosom's lord

'Sits lightly in his throne,'

so, to take up almost any one of Dr. Newman's books, and they are happily numerous — between twenty and thirty volumes — is to be led away from 'evil tongues,' and the 'sneers of selfish men,' from the mud and the mire, the shoving and pushing that gather and grow round the pig-troughs of life, into a diviner ether, a purer air, and is to spend your time in the company of one who, though he may sometimes astonish, yet never fails to make you feel (to use Carlyle's words about a very different author), 'that you have 'passed your evening well and nobly, as 'in a temple of wisdom, not ill and dis-'gracefully as in brawling tavern supper-'rooms with fools and noisy persons.'

The tendency to be egotistical noticeable in some persons who are free from the faintest taint of egotism is a tendency hard to account for — but delightful to watch.

'Anything,' says glorious John Dryden, 'though ever so little, which a man speaks 'of himself — in my opinion, is still too 'much.' A sound opinion most surely, and yet how interesting are the personal touches we find scattered up and down

Dryden's noble prefaces. So with Newman — his dignity, his self-restraint, his taste, are all the greatest stickler for a stiff upper lip and the consumption of your own smoke could desire, and yet the personal note is frequently sounded. He is never afraid to strike it when the perfect harmony that exists between his character and his style demands its sound, and so it has come about that we love what he has written because he wrote it, and we love him who wrote it because of what he has written.

I now approach by far the pleasantest part of my task, namely, the selection of two or three passages from Dr. Newman's books by way of illustrating what I have taken the liberty to say are notable characteristics of his style.

Let me begin with a chance specimen of the precision of his language. The passage is from the prefatory notice the Cardinal prefixed to the Rev. William Palmer's *Notes of a Visit to the Russian Church in the Years* 1840, 1841. It is dated 1882, and is consequently the writing of a man over eighty years of age: 'William Palmer

'was one of those earnest-minded and de-
'vout men, forty years since, who, deeply
'convinced of the great truth that our
'Lord had instituted, and still acknowl-
'edges and protects, a Visible Church —
'one, individual, and integral; Catholic,
'as spread over the earth, Apostolic, as
'coeval with the Apostles of Christ, and
'Holy, as being the dispenser of His Word
'and Sacraments — considered it at pres-
'ent to exist in three main branches, or
'rather in a triple presence, the Latin, the
'Greek, and the Anglican, these three
'being one and the same Church distin-
'guishable from each other by secondary,
'fortuitous, and local, though important
'characteristics. And whereas the whole
'Church in its fulness was, as they be-
'lieved, at once and severally Anglican,
'Greek, and Latin, so in turn each one
'of those three was the whole Church;
'whence it followed that, whenever any
'one of the three was present, the other
'two, by the nature of the case, was absent,
'and therefore the three could not have
'direct relations with each other, as if they
'were three substantive bodies, there being

'no real difference between them except 'the external accident of place. More- 'over, since, as has been said, on a given 'territory there could not be more than 'one of the three, it followed that Chris- 'tians generally, wherever they were, were 'bound to recognise, and had a claim to be 'recognised by that one; ceasing to belong 'to the Anglican Church, as Anglican, 'when they were at Rome, and ignoring 'Rome, as Rome, when they found them- 'selves at Moscow. Lastly, not to ac- 'knowledge this inevitable outcome of the 'initial idea of the Church, viz., that it was 'both everywhere and one, was bad logic, 'and to act in opposition to it was nothing 'short of setting up altar against altar, 'that is, the hideous sin of schism, and a 'sacrilege. This I conceive to be the for- 'mal teaching of Anglicanism.'

The most carefully considered judgments of Lord Westbury or Lord Cairns may be searched in vain for finer examples of stern accuracy and beautiful aptness of language.

For examples of what may be called Newman's oratorical rush, one has not far

to look — though when torn from their context and deprived of their conclusion they are robbed of three-fourths of their power. Here is a passage from his second lecture addressed to the Anglican Party of 1833. It is on the Life of the National Church of England.

'Doubtless the National religion is alive. 'It is a great power in the midst of us, it 'wields an enormous influence; it re- 'presses a hundred foes; it conducts a 'hundred undertakings; it attracts men to 'it, uses them, rewards them; it has thou- 'sands of beautiful homes up and down 'the country where quiet men may do its 'work and benefit its people; it collects 'vast sums in the shape of voluntary offer- 'ings, and with them it builds Churches, 'prints and distributes innumerable Bibles, 'books, and tracts, and sustains mission- 'aries in all parts of the earth. In all 'parts of the earth it opposes the Catholic 'Church, denounces her as anti-christian, 'bribes the world against her, obstructs 'her influence, apes her authority, and 'confuses her evidence. In all parts of 'the world it is the religion of gentlemen,

'of scholars, of men of substance, and 'men of no personal faith at all. If this 'be life, if it be life to impart a tone to 'the Court and Houses of Parliament, to 'Ministers of State, to law and literature, 'to universities and schools, and to soci-'ety, if it be life to be a principle of order 'in the population, and an organ of benev-'olence and almsgiving towards the poor, 'if it be life to make men decent, respect-'able, and sensible, to embellish and re-'form the family circle, to deprive vice of 'its grossness and to shed a glow over 'avarice and ambition; if, indeed, it is the 'life of religion to be the first jewel in the 'Queen's crown, and the highest step of 'her throne, then doubtless the National 'Church is replete, it overflows with life; 'but the question has still to be answered: 'life of what kind?'

For a delightful example of Dr. Newman's humour, which is largely, if not entirely, a playful humour, I will remind the reader of the celebrated imaginary speech against the British Constitution attributed to 'a member of the junior branch of the 'Potemkin family,' and supposed to have

been delivered at Moscow in the year 1850. It is too long for quotation, but will be found in the first of the *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England.* The whole book is one of the best humoured books in the English language.

Of his sarcasm, the following example, well-known as it is, must be given. It occurs in the *Essay on the Prospects of the Anglican Church*, which is reprinted from the *British Critic* in the first volume of the *Essays Critical and Historical.*

'In the present day mistiness is the 'mother of wisdom. A man who can set 'down half a dozen general propositions, 'which escape from destroying one another 'only by being diluted into truisms, who 'can hold the balance between opposites 'so skilfully as to do without fulcrum or 'beam, who never enunciates a truth with-'out guarding himself from being supposed 'to exclude the contradictory, who holds 'that Scripture is the only authority — yet 'that the Church is to be deferred to, that 'faith only justifies, yet that it does not 'justify without works, that grace does not 'depend on the sacraments, yet is not given

'without them, that bishops are a divine 'ordinance — yet those who have them 'not are in the same religious condition as 'those who have — this is your safe man 'and the hope of the Church; this is what 'the Church is said to want, not party 'men, but sensible, temperate, sober, well-'judging persons to guide it through the 'channel of No-meaning, between the Scylla 'and Charybdis of Aye and No. But, 'alas! reading sets men thinking. They 'will not keep standing in that very atti-'tude, which you please to call sound 'Church-of-Englandism or orthodox Prot-'estantism. It tires them, it is so very 'awkward, and for the life of them — they 'cannot continue in it long together, where 'there is neither article nor canon to lean 'against — they cannot go on for ever stand-'ing on one leg, or sitting without a chair, 'or walking with their legs tied, or grazing 'like Tityrus's stags on the air. Promises 'imply conclusions — germs lead to devel-'opments; principles have issues; doctrines 'lead to action.'

Of the personal note to which I have made reference — no examples need or

should be given. Such things must not be transplanted from their own homes.

'The delicate shells lay on the shore;
The bubbles of the latest wave
Fresh pearl to their enamel gave;
And the bellowing of the savage sea
Greeted their safe escape to me.
I wiped away the weeds and foam
And brought my sea-born treasures home:
But the poor, unsightly noisome things
Had left their beauty on the shore,
With the sun and the sand and the wild uproar.'

If I may suppose this paper read by someone who is not yet acquainted with Newman's writings I would advise him, unless he is bent on theology, to begin not with the *Sermons*, not even with the *Apologia*, but with the *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England*. Then let him take up the *Lectures on the Idea of an University*, and on *University Subjects*. These may be followed by *Discussions and Arguments*, after which he will be well disposed to read the *Lectures on the Difficulties felt by Anglicans*. If after he has despatched these volumes he is not infected with what one of those charging

Bishops called 'Newmania,' he is possessed of a devil of obtuseness no wit of man can expel.

Of the strength of Dr. Newman's philosophical position, which he has explained in his *Grammar of Assent*, it would ill become me to speak. He there strikes the shield of John Locke. *Non nostrum est tantas componere lites.* But it is difficult for the most ignorant of us not to have shy notions and lurking suspicions even about such big subjects and great men. Locke maintained that a man's belief in a proposition really depended upon and bore a relation to the weight of evidence forthcoming in its favour. Dr. Newman asserts that certainty is a quality of propositions, and he has discovered in man 'an illative sense' whereby conclusions are converted into dogmas and a measured concurrence into an unlimited and absolute assurance. This illative sense is hardly a thing (if I may use an expression for ever associated with Lord Macaulay) to be cocksure about. Wedges, said the mediæval mechanic to his pupils, split wood by virtue of a wood-splitting quality in wedges — but now we are indis-

posed to endow wedges with qualities, and if not wedges, why propositions? But the *Grammar of Assent* is a beautiful book, and with a quotation from it I will close my quotations: 'Thus it is that Christianity 'is the fulfilment of the promise made to 'Abraham and of the Mosaic revelations; 'this is how it has been able from the first 'to occupy the world, and gain a hold on 'every class of human society to which its 'preachers reached; this is why the Roman 'power and the multitude of religions which 'it embraced could not stand against it; 'this is the secret of its sustained energy, 'and its never-flagging martyrdoms; this is 'how at present it is so mysteriously potent, 'in spite of the new and fearful adversaries 'which beset its path. It has with it that 'gift of stanching and healing the one deep 'wound of human nature, which avails more 'for its success than a full encyclopædia of 'scientific knowledge and a whole library 'of controversy, and therefore it must last 'while human nature lasts.'

It is fitting that our last quotation should be one which leaves the Cardinal face to face with his faith.

Dr. Newman's poetry cannot be passed over without a word, though I am ill-fitted to do it justice. *Lead, Kindly Light* has forced its way into every hymn-book and heart. Those who go, and those who do not go to church, the fervent believer and the tired-out sceptic here meet on common ground. The language of the verses in their intense sincerity seems to reduce all human feelings, whether fed on dogmas and holy rites or on man's own sad heart, to a common denominator.

> 'The night is dark, and I am far from home,
> Lead Thou me on.'

The believer can often say no more. The unbeliever will never willingly say less.

Amongst Dr. Newman's *Verses on Various Occasions* — though in some cases the earlier versions to be met with in the *Lyra Apostolica* are to be preferred to the later — poems will be found by those who seek, conveying sure and certain evidence of the possession by the poet of the true lyrical gift — though almost cruelly controlled by the course of the poet's thoughts and the nature of his subjects. One is sometimes

constrained to cry, 'Oh, if he could only 'get out into the wild blowing airs, how 'his pinions would sweep the skies!' but such thoughts are unlicensed and unseemly. That we have two such religious poets as Cardinal Newman and Miss Christina Rossetti is or ought to be matter for sincere rejoicing.

II

To the inveterate truth-hunter there has been much of melancholy in the very numerous estimates, hasty estimates no doubt, but all manifestly sincere, which the death of Cardinal Newman has occasioned.

The nobility of the pursuit after truth wherever the pursuit may lead has been abundantly recognised. Nobody has been base enough or cynical enough to venture upon a sneer. It has been marvellous to notice what a hold an unpopular thinker, dwelling very far apart from the trodden paths of English life and thought, had obtained upon men's imaginations. The 'man in the street' was to be heard declaring that the dead Cardinal was a fine fellow. The newspaper-makers were as-

tonished at the interest displayed by their readers. How many of these honest mourners, asked the *Globe*, have read a page of Newman's writings? It is a vain inquiry. Newman's books have long had a large and increasing sale. They stand on all sorts of shelves, and wherever they go a still, small voice accompanies them. They are speaking books; an air breathes from their pages.

> 'Again I saw and I confess'd
> Thy speech was rare and high,
> And yet it vex'd my burden'd breast,
> And scared I knew not why.'

It is a strange criticism that recently declared Newman's style to lack individuality. Oddity it lacked, and mannerisms, but not, so it seems to me, individuality.

But this wide recognition of Newman's charm both of character and style cannot conceal from the anxious truth-hunter that there has been an almost equally wide recognition of the futility of Newman's method and position.

Method and position? These were sacred words with the Cardinal. But a few days ago he seemed securely posed before

the world. It cannot surely have been his unrivalled dialectics only that made men keep civil tongues in their heads or hesitate to try conclusions with him. It was rather, we presume, that there was no especial occasion to speak of him otherwise than with the respect and affection due to honoured age. But when he is dead — it is different. It is necessary then to gauge his method and to estimate his influence, not as a living man, but as a dead one.

And what has that estimate been? The saintly life, the mysterious presence, are admitted, and well-nigh nothing else. All sorts of reasons are named, some plausible, all cunningly contrived, to account for Newman's quarrel with the Church of his baptism. A writer in the *Guardian* suggests one, a writer in the *Times* another, a writer in the *Saturday Review* a third, and so on.

However much these reasons may differ one from another, they all agree in this, that of necessity they have ceased to operate. They were personal reasons, and perished with the man whose faith and actions they controlled. Nobody else, it

has been throughout assumed, will become a Romanist for the same reasons as John Henry Newman. If he had not been brought up an Evangelical, if he had learnt German, if he had married, if he had been made an archdeacon, all would have been different.

There is something positively terrible in this natural history of opinion. All the passion and the pleading of a life, the thought, and the labour, the sustained argument, the library of books, reduced to what? — a series of accidents!

Newman himself well knew this aspect of affairs. No one's plummet since Pascal's had taken deeper soundings of the infirmity — the oceanic infirmity — of the intellect. What actuary, he asks contemptuously, can appraise the value of a man's opinions? In how many a superb passage does he exhibit the absurd, the haphazard fashion in which men and women collect the odds and ends, the bits and scraps they are pleased to place in the museum of their minds, and label, in all good faith, their convictions! Newman almost revels in such subjects. The solemn pomposity which so frequently digni-

fies with the name of research or inquiry feeble scratchings amongst heaps of verbosity had no more determined foe than the Cardinal.

But now the same measure is being meted out to him, and we are told of a thinker's life — it is nought.

He thought he had constructed a way of escape from the City of Destruction for himself and his followers across the bridge of that illative sense which turns conclusions into assents, and opinions into faiths — but the bridge seems no longer standing.

The writer in the *Guardian*, who attributes Newman's restlessness in the English Church to the smug and comfortable life of many of its clergy rather than to any especial craving after authority, no doubt wrote with knowledge.

A married clergy seemed always to annoy Newman. Readers of *Loss and Gain* are not likely to forget the famous 'pork chop' passage, which describes a young parson and his bride bustling into a stationer's shop to buy hymnals and tracts. What was once only annoyance at some of the ways

of John Bull on his knees, soon ripened into something not very unlike hatred. Never was any invention less *ben trovato* than that which used to describe Newman as pining after the 'incomparable liturgy' or the 'cultured society' of the Church of England. He hated *ex animo* all those aspects of Anglicanism which best recommend it to Erastian minds. A church of which sanctity is *not* a note is sure to have many friends.

The *Saturday Review* struck up a fine national tune:

'An intense but narrow conception of 'personal holiness, and personal satisfac- 'tion with dogma, ate him (Newman) up — 'the natural legacy of the Evangelical 'school in which he had been nursed, the 'great tradition of Tory churchmanship, '*of pride in the Church of England, as* '*such*, of determination to stand shoulder 'to shoulder in resisting the foreigner, 'whether he came from Rome or from 'Geneva, from Tübingen, or from Saint 'Sulpice, of the union of all social and 'intellectual culture with theological learn- 'ing — the idea which, alone of all such

'ideas, has made education patriotic, and 'orthodoxy generous, made insufficient ap- 'peal to him, and for want of it he himself 'made shipwreck.'

Here is John Bullism, bold and erect. If the Ark of Peter won't hoist the Union Jack, John Bull must have an Ark of his own, with patriotic clergy of his own manufacture tugging at the oar, and with nothing foreign in the hold save some sound old port. 'It will always be remem- 'bered to Newman's credit,' says this same reviewer, 'that he knew good wine if he 'did not drink much.' Mark the 'If'; there is much virtue in it.

We are now provided with two causes of Newman's discomfort in the Church of England — its too comfortable clergy, and its too frequent introduction of the lion and the unicorn amongst the symbols of religion — both effective causes, as may be proved by many passages; but to say that either or both availed to drive him out, and compelled him to seek shelter at the hands of one whom he had long regarded as a foe, is to go very far indeed.

It should not be overlooked that these

minimisers of Newman's influence are all firmly attached for different reasons to the institution Newman left. Their judgments therefore cannot be allowed to pass unchallenged. What Disraeli meant when he said that Newman's secession had dealt the Church of England a blow under which it still reeled, was that by this act Newman expressed before the whole world his profound conviction that our so-called National Church was not a branch of the Church Catholic. And this really is the point of weakness upon which Newman hurled himself. This is the damage he did to the Church of this island. Throughout all his writings, in a hundred places, in jests and sarcasms as well as in papers and arguments, there crops up this settled conviction that England is not a Catholic country, and that John Bull is not a member of the Catholic Church.

This may not matter much to the British electorate; but to those who care about such things, who rely upon the validity of orders and the efficacy of sacraments, who need a pedigree for their faith, who do not agree with Emerson that if a man would

be great he must be a Nonconformist — over these people it would be rash to assume that Newman's influence is spent. The general effect of his writings, the demands they awaken, the spirit they breathe, are all hostile to Anglicanism. They create a profound dissatisfaction with, a distaste for, the Church of England as by law established. Those who are affected by this spirit will no longer be able comfortably to enjoy the maimed rites and practices of their Church. They will feel their place is elsewhere, and sooner or later they will pack up and go. It is far too early in the day to leave Newman out of sight.

But to end where we began. There has been scant recognition in the Cardinal's case of the usefulness of devoting life to anxious inquiries after truth. It is very noble to do so, and when you come to die, the newspapers, from the *Times* to the *Sporting Life*, will first point out, after their superior fashion, how much better was this pure-minded and unworldly thinker than the soiled politician, full of opportunism and inconsistency, trying hard to drown the echoes of his past with his loud

vociferations, and then proceed in a few short sentences to establish how out of date is this Thinker's thought, how false his reasoning, how impossible his conclusions, and lastly, how dead his influence.

It is very puzzling and difficult, and drives some men to collect butterflies and beetles. Thinkers are not, however, to be disposed of by scratches of the pen. A Cardinal of the Roman Church is not, to say the least of it, more obviously a shipwreck than a dean or even a bishop of the English establishment. Character, too, counts for something. Of Newman it may be said :

> 'Fate gave what chance shall not control,
> His sad lucidity of soul.'

But the truth-hunter is still unsatisfied.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

I

The news of Mr. Arnold's sudden death at Liverpool struck a chill into many hearts, for although a somewhat constrained writer (despite his playfulness) and certainly the least boisterous of men, he was yet most distinctly on the side of human enjoyment. He conspired and contrived to make things pleasant. Pedantry he abhorred. He was a man of this life and this world. A severe critic of the world he indeed was, but finding himself in it and not precisely knowing what is beyond it, like a brave and true-hearted man he set himself to make the best of it. Its sight and sounds were dear to him. The 'uncrumpling 'fern,' the eternal moon-lit snow, 'Sweet 'William with its homely cottage-smell,' 'the red grouse springing at our sound,'

the tinkling bells of the 'high-pasturing 'kine,' the vagaries of men, women, and dogs, their odd ways and tricks, whether of mind or manner, all delighted, amused, tickled him. Human loves, joys, sorrows, human relationships, ordinary ties interested him:

> 'The help in strife,
> The thousand sweet still joys of such
> As hand in hand face earthly life.'

In a sense of the words which is noble and blessed, he was of the Earth Earthy.

In his earlier days Mr. Arnold was much misunderstood. That rowdy Philistine the *Daily Telegraph* called him 'a prophet of 'the kid-glove persuasion,' and his own too frequent iteration of the somewhat dandiacal phrase 'sweetness and light' helped to promote the notion that he was a fanciful, finikin Oxonian,

> 'A fine puss gentleman that's all perfume,'

quite unfit for the most ordinary wear and tear of life. He was in reality nothing of the kind, though his literary style was a little in keeping with this false conception. His mind was based on the plainest possi-

ble things. What he hated most was the fantastic — the far-fetched, all elaborated fancies, and strained interpretations. He stuck to the beaten track of human experience, and the broader the better. He was a plain-sailing man. This is his true note. In his much criticised, but as I think admirable introduction to the selection he made from Wordsworth's poems, he admits that the famous *Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections in Early Childhood* is not one of his prime favourites, and in that connection he quotes from Thucydides the following judgment on the early exploits of the Greek Race and applies it to these intimations of immortality in babies. 'It is impossible to speak 'with certainty of what is so remote, but 'from all that we can really investigate 'I should say that they were no very great 'things.'

This quotation is in Mr. Arnold's own vein. His readers will have no difficulty in calling to mind numerous instances in which his dislike of everything not broadly based on the generally admitted facts of sane experience manifests itself. Though

fond — perhaps exceptionally fond — of pretty things and sayings, he had a severe taste, and hated whatever struck him as being in the least degree sickly, or silly, or over-heated. No doubt he may often have considered that to be sickly or silly which in the opinion of others was pious and becoming. It may be that he was over-impatient of men's flirtations with futurity. As his paper on Professor Dowden's Life of Shelley shows, he disapproved of 'irregular relations.' He considered we were all married to plain Fact, and objected to our carrying on a flirtation with mystic maybe's and calling it Religion. Had it been a man's duty to believe in a specific revelation it would have been God's duty to make that revelation credible. Such, at all events, would appear to have been the opinion of this remarkable man, who though he had even more than his share of an Oxonian's reverence for the great Bishop of Durham, was unable to admit the force of the main argument of *The Analogy*. Mr. Arnold was indeed too fond of parading his inability for hard reasoning. I am not, he keeps saying, like the Arch-

bishop of York, or the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol. There was affectation about this, for his professed inferiority did not prevent him from making it almost excruciatingly clear that in his opinion those gifted prelates were, whilst exercising their extraordinary powers, only beating the air, or in plainer words busily engaged in talking nonsense. But I must not wander from my point, which simply is that Arnold's dislike of anything recondite or remote was intense, genuine, and characteristic.

He always asserted himself to be a good Liberal. So in truth he was. A better Liberal than many a one whose claim to that title it would be thought absurd to dispute. He did not indeed care very much about some of the articles of the Liberal creed as now professed. He had taken a great dislike to the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill. He wished the Church and the State to continue to recognise each other. He had not that jealousy of State interference in England which used to be (it is so no longer) a note of political Liberalism. He sympathised with Italian

national aspirations because he thought it wrong to expect a country with such a past as Italy to cast in her lot with Austria. He did not sympathise with Irish national aspirations because he thought Ireland ought to be willing to admit that she was relatively to England an inferior and less interesting country, and therefore one which had no moral claim for national institutions. He may have been right or wrong on these points without affecting his claim to be considered a Liberal. Liberalism is not a creed, but a frame of mind. Mr. Arnold's frame of mind was Liberal. No living man is more deeply permeated with the grand doctrine of Equality than was he. He wished to see his countrymen and countrywomen all equal: Jack as good as his master, and Jack's master as good as Jack; and neither taking claptrap. He had a hearty un-English dislike of anomalies and absurdities. He fully appreciated the French Revolution and was consequently a Democrat. He was not a democrat from irresistible impulse, or from love of mischief, or from hatred of priests, or like the average British work-

man from a not unnatural desire to get something on account of his share of the family inheritance — but all roads lead to Rome, and Mr. Arnold was a democrat from a sober and partly sorrowful conviction that no other form of government was possible. He was an Educationalist, and Education is the true Leveller. His almost passionate cry for better middle-class education arose from his annoyance at the exclusion of large numbers of this great class from the best education the country afforded. It was a ticklish job telling this great, wealthy, middle class — which according to the newspapers had made England what she is and what everybody else wishes to be — that it was, from an educational point of view, beneath contempt. 'I hear with surprise,' said Sir Thomas Bazley at Manchester, 'that the education of our great middle 'class requires improvement.' But Mr. Arnold had courage. Indeed he carried one kind of courage to an heroic pitch. I mean the courage of repeating yourself over and over again. It is a sound forensic maxim: Tell a judge twice whatever

you want him to hear. Tell a special jury thrice, and a common jury half-a-dozen times the view of a case you wish them to entertain. Mr. Arnold treated the middle class as a common jury and hammered away at them remorselessly and with the most unblushing iteration. They groaned under him, they snorted, and they sniffed — but they listened, and, what was more to the purpose, their children listened, and with filial frankness told their heavy sires that Mr. Arnold was quite right, and that their lives were dull, and hideous, and arid, even as he described them as being. Mr. Arnold's work as a School Inspector gave him great opportunities of going about amongst all classes of the people. Though not exactly apostolic in manner or method, he had something to say both to and of everybody. The aristocracy were polite and had ways he admired, but they were impotent of ideas and had a dangerous tendency to become studiously frivolous. Consequently the Future did not belong to them. Get ideas and study gravity, was the substance of his discourse to the Barbarians, as, with that trick of his of mis-

calling God's creatures, he had the effrontery to dub our adorable nobility. But it was the middle class upon whom fell the full weight of his discourse. His sermons to them would fill a volume. Their great need was culture, which he declared to be *a study of perfection*, the sentiment for beauty and sweetness, the sentiment against hideousness and rawness. The middle class, he protested, needed to know all the best things that have been said and done in the world since it began, and to be thereby lifted out of their holes and corners, private academies and chapels in side streets, above their tenth-rate books and miserable preferences, into the main stream of national existence. The lower orders he judged to be a mere rabble, and thought it was as yet impossible to predict whether or not they would hereafter display any aptitude for Ideas, or passion for Perfection. But in the meantime he bade them learn to cohere, and to read and write, and above all he conjured them not to imitate the middle classes.

It is not easy to know everything about everybody, and it may be doubted whether

Mr. Arnold did not over-rate the degree of acquaintance with his countrymen his peregrinations among them had conferred upon him. In certain circles he was supposed to have made the completest possible diagnosis of dissent, and was credited with being able, after five minutes' conversation with any individual Nonconformist, unerringly to assign him to his particular chapel, Independent, Baptist, Primitive Methodist, Unitarian, or whatever else it might be, and this though they had only been talking about the weather. To people who know nothing about dissenters, Mr. Arnold might well seem to know everything. However, he did know a great deal, and used his knowledge with great cunning and effect, and a fine instinctive sense of the whereabouts of the weakest points. Mr. Arnold's sense for equality and solidarity was not impeded by any exclusive tastes or hobbies. Your collector, even though it be but of butterflies, is rarely a democrat. One of Arnold's favourite lines in Wordsworth was —

'Joy that is in widest commonalty spread.'

The collector's joys are not of that kind.

Mr. Arnold was not, I believe, a collector of anything. He certainly was not of books. I once told him I had been reading a pamphlet, written by him in 1859, on the Italian Question. He inquired how I came across it. I said I had picked it up in a shop. 'Oh, yes,' said he, 'some old 'curiosity shop, I suppose.' Nor was he joking. He seemed quite to suppose that old books, and old clothes, and old chairs were huddled together for sale in the same resort of the curious. He did not care about such things. The prices given for the early editions of his own poems seemed to tease him. His literary taste was broadly democratic. He had no mind for fished-up authors, nor did he ever indulge in swaggering rhapsodies over second-rate poets. The best was good enough for him. 'The best poetry' was what he wanted, 'a clearer, deeper sense of the best 'in poetry, and of the strength and joy to 'be drawn from it.' So he wrote in his general introduction to Mr. Ward's *Selections from the English Poets.* The best of everything for everybody. This was his gospel and his prayer.

Approaching Mr. Arnold's writings more nearly, it seems inevitable to divide them into three classes. His poems, his theological excursions, and his criticism, using the last word in a wide sense as including a criticism of life and of politics as well as of books and style.

Of Mr. Arnold's poetry it is hard for anyone who has felt it to the full during the most impressionable period of life to speak without emotion overcoming reason.

> 'Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,
> Hopes and fears, belief and unbelieving.'

It is easy to admit, in general terms, its limitations. Mr. Arnold is the last man in the world anybody would wish to shove out of his place. A poet at all points, armed cap-a-pie against criticism, like Lord Tennyson, he certainly was not. Nor had his verse any share of the boundless vitality, the fierce pulsation so nobly characteristic of Mr. Browning. But these admissions made, we decline to parley any further with the enemy. We cast him behind us. Mr. Arnold, to those who cared for him at all, was the most *useful* poet of his day. He

lived much nearer us than poets of his distinction usually do. He was neither a prophet nor a recluse. He lived neither above us, nor away from us. There are two ways of being a recluse — a poet may live remote from men, or he may live in a crowded street but remote from their thoughts. Mr. Arnold did neither, and consequently his verse tells and tingles. None of it is thrown away. His readers feel that he bore the same yoke as themselves. Theirs is a common bondage with his. Beautiful, surpassingly beautiful some of Mr. Arnold's poetry is, but we seize upon the *thought* first and delight in the *form* afterwards. No doubt the form is an extraordinary comfort, for the thoughts are often, as thoughts so widely spread could not fail to be, the very thoughts that are too frequently expressed rudely, crudely, indelicately. To open Mr. Arnold's poems is to escape from a heated atmosphere and a company not wholly free from offence even though composed of those who share our opinions — from loud-mouthed random talking men into a well-shaded retreat which seems able to impart, even to our feverish

persuasions and crude conclusions, something of the coolness of falling water, something of the music of rustling trees. This union of thought, substantive thought, with beauty of form — of strength with elegance, is rare. I doubt very much whether Mr. Arnold ever realised the devotedness his verse inspired in the minds of thousands of his countrymen and countrywomen, both in the old world and the new. He is not a bulky poet. Three volumes contain him. But hardly a page can be opened without the eye lighting on verse which at one time or another has been, either to you or to someone dear to you, strength or joy. The *Buried Life*, *A Southern Night*, *Dover Beach*, *A Wanderer is Man from his Birth*, *Rugby Chapel*, *Resignation*. How easy to prolong the list, and what a list it is! Their very names are dear to us even as are the names of Mother Churches and Holy Places to the Votaries of the old Religion. I read the other day in the *Spectator* newspaper, an assertion that Mr. Arnold's poetry had never consoled anybody. A falser statement was never made innocently. It may never have consoled the writer in the

Spectator, but because the stomach of a dram-drinker rejects cold water is no kind of reason for a sober man abandoning his morning tumbler of the pure element. Mr. Arnold's poetry has been found full of consolation. It would be strange if it had not been. It is

'No stretched metre of an antique song,'

but quick and to the point. There are finer sonnets in the English language than the two following, but there are no better sermons. And if it be said that sermons may be found in stones, but ought not to be in sonnets, I fall back upon the fact which Mr. Arnold himself so cheerfully admitted, that the middle classes, who in England, at all events, are Mr. Arnold's chief readers, are serious, and love sermons. Some day perhaps they will be content with metrical exercises, ballades, and roundels.

'EAST LONDON

'Twas August, and the fierce sun overhead
Smote on the squalid streets of Bethnal Green,
And the pale weaver, through his windows seen
In Spitalfields, look'd thrice dispirited.

'I met a preacher there I knew, and said:
"Ill and o'erwork'd, how fare you in this scene?"
"Bravely!" said he; "for I of late have been
Much cheer'd with thoughts of Christ, *the living bread.*"

'O human soul! as long as thou canst so
Set up a mark of everlasting light,
Above the howling senses' ebb and flow,
To cheer thee, and to right thee if thou roam —
Not with lost toil thou labourest through the night!
Thou mak'st the heaven thou hop'st indeed thy home.'

'THE BETTER PART

'Long fed on boundless hopes, O race of man,
How angrily thou spurn'st all simpler fare!
"Christ," some one says, "was human as we are;
No judge eyes us from Heaven, our sin to scan;

'We live no more, when we have done our span." —
"Well, then, for Christ," thou answerest, "who can care?
From Sin, which Heaven records not, why forbear?
Live we like brutes our life without a plan!"

'So answerest thou; but why not rather say:
"Hath man no second life? — *Pitch this one high!*
Sits there no judge in Heaven, our sin to see?

'*More strictly, then, the inward judge obey!*
Was Christ a man like us? — *Ah! let us try*
If we then, too, can be such men as he!"'

Mr. Arnold's love of nature, and poetic treatment of nature, was to many a vexed

soul a great joy and an intense relief. Mr. Arnold was a genuine Wordsworthian — being able to read everything Wordsworth ever wrote except *Vaudracour and Julia*. The influence of Wordsworth upon him was immense, but he was enabled, by the order of his mind, to reject with the heartiest goodwill the cloudy pantheism which robs so much of Wordsworth's best verse of the heightened charm of reality, for, after all, poetry, like religion, must be true, or it is nothing. This strong aversion to the unreal also prevented Mr. Arnold, despite his love of the classical forms, from a nonsensical neo-paganism. His was a manlier attitude. He had no desire to keep tugging at the dry breasts of an outworn creed, nor any disposition to go down on his knees, or *hunkers* as the Scotch more humorously call them, before plaster casts of Venus, or even of 'Proteus rising from 'the sea.' There was something very refreshing about this. In the long run even a gloomy truth is better company than a cheerful falsehood. The perpetual strain of living down to a lie, the depressing atmosphere of a circumscribed intelligence

tell upon the system, and the cheerful falsehood soon begins to look puffy and dissipated.

'The Youth of Nature.

'For, oh! is it you, is it you,
Moonlight, and shadow, and lake,
And mountains, that fill us with joy,
Or the poet who sings you so well?
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
More than the singer are these
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
Yourselves and your fellows ye know not; and me,
The mateless, the one, will ye know?
Will ye scan me, and read me, and tell
Of the thoughts that ferment in my breast,
My longing, my sadness, my joy?
Will ye claim for your great ones the gift
To have rendered the gleam of my skies,
To have echoed the moan of my seas,
Uttered the voice of my hills?
When your great ones depart, will ye say:
All things have suffered a loss,
Nature is hid in their grave?

Race after race, man after man,
Have thought that my secret was theirs,
Have dream'd that I lived but for them,
That they were my glory and joy.
They are dust, they are changed, they are gone!
I remain.'

When a poet is dead we turn to his verse with quickened feelings. He rests from his labours. We still

'Stem across the sea of life by night,'

and the voice, once the voice of the living, of one who stood by our side, has for a while an unfamiliar accent, coming to us as it does no longer from our friendly earth but from the strange cold caverns of death.

'Joy comes and goes, hope ebbs and flows
Like the wave,
Change doth unknit the tranquil strength of men.
Love lends life a little grace,
A few sad smiles; and then,
Both are laid in one cold place,
In the grave.

'Dreams dawn and fly, friends smile and die
Like spring flowers;
Our vaunted life is one long funeral.
Men dig graves with bitter tears
For their dead hopes; and all,
Mazed with doubts and sick with fears,
Count the hours.

'We count the hours! These dreams of ours,
False and hollow,
Do we go hence and find they are not dead?
Joys we dimly apprehend,
Faces that smiled and fled,
Hopes born here, and born to end,
Shall we follow?'

In a poem like this Mr. Arnold is seen at his best; he fairly forces himself into the very front ranks. In form almost equal to Shelley, or at any rate not so very far behind him, whilst of course in reality, in wholesome thought, in the pleasures that are afforded by thinking, it is of incomparable excellence.

We die as we do, not as we would. Yet on reading again Mr. Arnold's *Wish*, we feel that the manner of his death was much to his mind.

'A Wish.

'I ask not that my bed of death
From bands of greedy heirs be free:
For these besiege the latest breath
Of fortune's favoured sons, not me.

'I ask not each kind soul to keep
Tearless, when of my death he hears.
Let those who will, if any — weep!
There are worse plagues on earth than tears.

'I ask but that my death may find
The freedom to my life denied;
Ask but the folly of mankind
Then — then at last to quit my side.

'Spare me the whispering, crowded room,
The friends who come, and gape, and go;
The ceremonious air of gloom —
All, which makes death a hideous show!

'Nor bring to see me cease to live
Some doctor full of phrase and fame
To shake his sapient head and give
The ill he cannot cure a name.

'Nor fetch to take the accustom'd toll
Of the poor sinner bound for death
His brother-doctor of the soul
To canvass with official breath

'The future and its viewless things —
That undiscover'd mystery
Which one who feels death's winnowing wings
Must needs read clearer, sure, than he!

'Bring none of these; but let me be
While all around in silence lies,
Moved to the window near, and see
Once more before my dying eyes,

'Bathed in the sacred dews of morn
The wide aërial landscape spread —
The world which was ere I was born,
The world which lasts when I am dead.

'Which never was the friend of *one*,
Nor promised love it could not give,
But lit for all its generous sun
And lived itself and made us live.

'Then let me gaze — till I become
In soul, with what I gaze on, wed!
To feel the universe my home;
To have before my mind — instead

'Of the sick room, the mortal strife,
The turmoil for a little breath —
The pure eternal course of life,
Not human combatings with death!

'Thus feeling, gazing, let me grow
Composed, refresh'd, ennobled, clear —
Then willing let my spirit go
To work or wait, elsewhere or here!'

To turn from Arnold's poetry to his theological writings — if so grim a name can be given to these productions — from *Rugby Chapel* to *Literature and Dogma*, from *Obermann* to *God and the Bible*, from *Empedocles on Etna* to *St. Paul and Protestantism*, is to descend from the lofty table-lands,

'From the dragon-warder'd fountains
Where the springs of knowledge are,
From the watchers on the mountains
And the bright and morning star,'

to the dusty highroad. It cannot, I think, be asserted that either the plan or the style of these books was in keeping with their subjects. It was characteristic of Mr. Arnold, and like his practical turn of mind, to begin *Literature and Dogma* in the *Cornhill Magazine*. A book rarely shakes off the first draft — *Literature and Dogma* never did. It is full of repetitions and wearisome recapitulations, well enough in a magazine where each issue is sure to

be read by many who will never see another number, but which disfigure a book. The style is likewise too jaunty. Bantering the Trinity is not yet a recognised English pastime. Bishop-baiting is, but this notwithstanding, most readers of *Literature and Dogma* grew tired of the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol and of his alleged desire to do something for the honour of the Godhead, long before Mr. Arnold showed any signs of weariness. But making all these abatements, and fully admitting that *Literature and Dogma* is not likely to prove permanently interesting to the English reader, it must be pronounced a most valuable and useful book, and one to which the professional critics and philosophers never did justice. The object of *Literature and Dogma* was no less than the restoration of the use of the Bible to the sceptical laity. It was a noble object, and it was in a great measure, as thousands of quiet people could testify, attained. It was not a philosophical treatise. In its own way it was the same kind of thing as many of Cardinal Newman's writings. It started with an assumption, namely, that

it is impossible to believe in the miracles recorded in the Old and New Testaments. There is no laborious attempt to distinguish between one miracle and another, or to lighten the burden of faith in any particular. Nor is any serious attempt made to disprove miracles. Mr. Arnold did not write for those who find no difficulty in believing in the first chapter of St. Luke's gospel, or the sixteenth chapter of St. Mark's, but for those who simply cannot believe a word of either the one chapter or the other. Mr. Arnold knew well that this inability to believe is apt to generate in the mind of the unbeliever an almost physical repulsion to open books which are full of supernatural events. Mr. Arnold knew this and lamented it. His own love of the Bible was genuine and intense. He could read even Jeremiah and Habakkuk. As he loved Homer with one side of him, so he loved the Bible with the other. He saw how men were crippled and maimed through growing up in ignorance of it, and living all the days of their lives outside its influence. He longed to restore it to them, to satisfy them that its place in the

mind of man — that its educational and moral power was not due to the miracles it records nor to the dogmas that Catholics have developed or Calvanists extracted from its pages, but to its literary excellence and to the glow and enthusiasm it has shed over conduct, self-sacrifice, humanity, and holy living. It was at all events a worthy object and a most courageous task. It exposed him to a heavy cross-fire. The Orthodox fell upon his book and abused it, unrestrainedly abused it for its familiar handling of their sacred books. They almost grudged Mr. Arnold his great acquaintance with the Bible, just as an Englishman might be annoyed at finding Moltke acquainted with all the roads from Dover to London. This feeling was natural, and on the whole I think it creditable to the orthodox party that a book so needlessly pain-giving as *Literature and Dogma* did not goad them into any personal abuse of its author. But they could not away with the book. Nor did the philosophical sceptic like it much better. The philosophical sceptic is too apt to hate the Bible, even as the devil was reported to

hate holy water. Its spirit condemns him. Its devout, heart-stirring, noble language creates an atmosphere which is deadly for pragmatic egotism. To make men once more careful students of the Bible was to deal a blow at materialism, and consequently was not easily forgiven. 'Why can't you leave the Bible alone?' they grumbled — 'What have we to do with it?' But Pharisees and Sadducees do not exhaust mankind, and Mr. Arnold's contributions to the religious controversies of his time were very far from the barren things that are most contributions, and indeed most controversies on such subjects. I believe I am right when I say that he induced a very large number of persons to take up again and make a daily study of the books both of the Old and the New Testament.

As a literary critic Mr. Arnold had at one time a great vogue. His *Essays in Criticism*, first published in 1865, made him known to a larger public than his poems or his delightful lectures on translating Homer had succeeded in doing. He had the happy knack of starting interesting subjects and saying all sorts of interesting

things by the way. There was the French Academy. Would it be a good thing to have an English Academy? He started the question himself and answered it in the negative. The public took it out of his mouth and proceeded to discuss it for itself, always on the assumption that he had answered it in the affirmative. But that is the way with the public. No sensible man minds it. To set something going is the most anybody can hope to do in this world. Where it will go to, and what sort of moss it will gather as it goes, for despite the proverb there is nothing incompatible between moss and motion, no one can say. In this volume, too, he struck the note, so frequently and usefully repeated, of self-dissatisfaction. To make us dissatisfied with ourselves, alive to our own inferiority, not absolute but in important respects, to check the chorus, then so loud, of self-approval of our majestic selves — to make us understand why nobody who is not an Englishman wants to be one, this was another of the tasks of this militant man. We all remember how *Wragg*[1] *is in cus-*

[1] See *Essays in Criticism*, p. 23.

tody. The papers on Heine and Spinoza and Marcus Aurelius were read with eagerness, with an enjoyment, with a sense of widening horizons too rare to be easily forgotten. They were light and graceful, but it would I think be unjust to call them slender. They were not written for specialists or even for students, but for ordinary men and women, particularly for young men and women, who carried away with them from the reading of *Essays in Criticism* something they could not have found anywhere else and which remained with them for the rest of their days, namely, a way of looking at things. A perfectly safe critic Mr. Arnold hardly was. Even in this volume he fusses too much about the De Guérins. To some later judgments of his it would be unkind to refer. It was said of the late Lord Justice Mellish by Lord Cairns that he went right instinctively. That is, he did not flounder into truth. Mr. Arnold never floundered, but he sometimes fell. A more delightful critic of literature we have not had for long. What pleasant reading are his *Lectures on Translating Homer*, which

ought to be at once reprinted. How full of good things! Not perhaps fit to be torn from their contexts, or paraded in a commonplace book, but of the kind which give a reader joy — which make literature tempting — which revive, even in dull middle-age, something of the enthusiasm of the love-stricken boy. Then, too, his *Study of Celtic Literature*. It does not matter much whether you can bring yourself to believe in the *Eisteddfod* or not. In fact Mr. Arnold did not believe in it. He knew perfectly well that better poetry is to be found every week in the poet's corner of every county newspaper in England than is produced annually at the *Eisteddfod*. You need not even share Mr. Arnold's opinion as to the inherent value of Celtic Literature, though this is of course a grave question, worthy of all consideration — but his *Study* is good enough to be read for love. It is full of charming criticism. Most critics are such savages — or if they are not savages, they are full of fantasies, and are capable at any moment of calling *Tom Jones* dull, or Sydney Smith a bore. Mr. Arnold was

not a savage, and could no more have called *Tom Jones* dull or Sydney Smith a bore, than Homer heavy or Milton vulgar. He was no gloomy specialist. He knew it took all sorts to make a world. He was alive to life. Its great movement fascinated him, even as it had done Burke, even as it did Cardinal Newman. He watched the rushing stream, the 'stir of existence,' the good and the bad, the false and the true, with an interest that never flagged. In his last words on translating Homer he says: 'And thus false tendency as well 'as true, vain effort as well as fruitful, go 'together to produce that great movement 'of life, to present that immense and 'magic spectacle of human affairs, which 'from boyhood to old age fascinates the 'gaze of every man of imagination, and 'which would be his terror if it were not 'at the same time his delight.'

Mr. Arnold never succeeded in getting his countrymen to take him seriously as a practical politician. He was regarded as an unauthorised practitioner whose prescriptions no respectable chemist would consent to make up. He had not the

diploma of Parliament, nor was he able, like the Secretary of an Early Closing Association, to assure any political aspirant that he commanded enough votes to turn an election. When Mr. John Morley took occasion after Mr. Arnold's death to refer to him in Parliament, the name was received respectfully but coldly. And yet he was eager about politics, and had much to say about political questions. His work in these respects was far from futile. What he said was never inept. It coloured men's thoughts, and contributed to the formation of their opinions far more than even public meetings. His introduction to his *Report on Popular Education in France*, published in 1861, is as instructive a piece of writing as is to be found in any historical disquisition of the last three decades. The paper on 'My Countrymen' in that most amusing book *Friendship's Garland* (which ought also to be at once reprinted) is full of point.

But it is time to stop. It is only possible to stop where we began. Matthew Arnold is dead. He would have been the last man to expect anyone to grow hysteri-

cal over the circumstance, and the first to denounce any strained emotion. *Il n'y a pas d'homme nécessaire.* No one ever grasped this great, this comforting, this cooling, this self-destroying truth more cordially than he did. As I write the words, I remember how he employed them in his preface to the second edition of *Essays in Criticism,* where he records a conversation, I doubt not an imaginary one, between himself and a portly jeweller from Cheapside — his fellow-traveller on the Woodford branch of the Great Eastern line. The traveller was greatly perturbed in his mind by the murder then lately perpetrated in a railway carriage by the notorious Müller. Mr. Arnold plied him with consolation. 'Suppose the worst to 'happen,' I said, 'suppose even yourself to 'be the victim — *il n'y a pas d'homme* '*nécessaire* — we should miss you for a day 'or two on the Woodford Branch, but the 'great mundane movement would still go 'on, the gravel walks of your villa would 'still be rolled, dividends would still be 'paid at the bank, omnibuses would still 'run, there would still be the old crush at 'the corner of Fenchurch Street.'

And so it proves for all — for portly jewellers and lovely poets.

> 'The Pillar still broods o'er the fields
> Which border Ennerdale Lake,
> And Egremont sleeps by the sea —
> Nature is fresh as of old,
> Is lovely; a mortal is dead.'

II

Lord Byron's antipathies were, as a rule, founded on some sound human basis, and it may well be that he was quite right for hating an author who was all author and nothing else. He could not have hated Matthew Arnold on that score, at all events, though perhaps he might have found some other ground for gratifying a feeling very dear to his heart. Mr. Arnold was many other things as well as a poet, so many other things that we need sometimes to be reminded that he was a poet. He allowed himself to be distracted in a variety of ways, he poured himself out in many strifes; though not exactly eager, he was certainly active. He discoursed on numberless themes, and was interested in many things of the kind usually called 'topics.'

Personally, we cannot force ourselves to bewail his agility, this leaping from bough to bough of the tree of talk and discussion. It argues an interest in things, a wide-eyed curiosity. If you find yourself in a village fair you do well to examine the booths, and when you bring your purchases home, the domestic authority will be wise not to scan too severely the trivial wares never meant to please a critical taste or to last a lifetime. Mr. Arnold certainly brought home some very queer things from his village fair, and was perhaps too fond of taking them for the texts of his occasional discourses. But others must find fault, we cannot. There is a pleasant ripple of life through Mr. Arnold's prose writings. His judgments are human judgments. He did not care for strange, out-of-the-way things; he had no odd tastes. He drank wine, so he once said, because he liked it — good wine, that is. And it was the same with poetry and books. He liked to understand what he admired, and the longer it took him to understand anything the less disposed he was to like it. Plain things suited him best. What he hated most was the far-fetched. He

had the greatest respect for Mr. Browning, and was a sincere admirer of much of his poetry, but he never made the faintest attempt to read any of the poet's later volumes. The reason probably was that he could not be bothered. Hazlitt, in a fine passage descriptive of the character of a scholar, says: 'Such a one lives all his life 'in a dream of learning, and has never once 'had his sleep broken by a real sense of 'things.' Mr. Arnold had a real sense of things. The writings of such a man could hardly fail to be interesting, whatever they might be about, even the burial of Dissenters or the cock of a nobleman's hat.

But for all that we are of those who, when we name the name of Arnold, mean neither the head-master of Rugby nor the author of *Culture and Anarchy* and *Literature and Dogma*, but the poet who sang, not, indeed, with Wordsworth, 'The wonder 'and bloom of the world,' but a severer, still more truthful strain, a life whose secret is not joy, but peace.

Standing on this high breezy ground, we are not disposed to concede anything to the enemy, unless, indeed, it be one some-

what ill-defended outpost connected with metre. The poet's ear might have been a little nicer. Had it been so, he would have spared his readers an occasional jar and a panegyric on Lord Byron's poetry. There are, we know, those who regard this outpost we have so lightly abandoned as the citadel. These rhyming gentry scout what Arnold called the terrible sentence passed on a French poet — *il dit tout ce qu'il veut, mais malheureusement il n'a rien à dire.* They see nothing terrible in a sentence which does but condemn them to nakedness. Thought is cumbersome. You skip best with nothing on. But the sober-minded English people are not the countrymen of Milton and Cowper, of Crabbe and Wordsworth, for nothing. They like poetry to be serious. We are fond of sermons. We may quarrel with the vicar's five-and-twenty minutes, but we let Carlyle go on for twice as many years, and until he had filled thirty-four octavo volumes.

The fact is that, though Arnold was fond of girding at the Hebrew in us, and used to quote his own Christian name with humorous resignation as only an instance of the

sort of thing he had to put up with, he was a Puritan at heart, and would have been as ill at ease at a Greek festival as Newman at a Spanish *auto da fé*.

What gives Arnold's verse its especial charm is his grave and manly sincerity. He is a poet without artifice or sham. He does not pretend to find all sorts of meanings in all sorts of things. He does not manipulate the universe and present his readers with any bottled elixir. This has been cast up against him as a reproach. His poetry, so we have been told, has no consolation in it. Here is a doctor, it is said, who makes up no drugs, a poet who does not proclaim that he sees God in the avalanche or hears Him in the thunder. The world will not, so we are assured, hang upon the lips of one who bids them not to be too sure that the winds are wailing man's secret to the complaining sea, or that nature is nothing but a theme for poets. These people may be right. In any event it is unwise to prophesy. What will be, will be. Nobody can wish to be proved wrong. It is best to be on the side of truth, whatever the truth may be. The real atheism

is to say, as men are found to do, that they would sooner be convicted of error they think pleasing, than have recognised an unwelcome truth a moment earlier than its final demonstration, if, indeed, such a moment should ever arrive for souls so craven. In the meantime, this much is plain, that there is no consolation in non-coincidence with fact, and no sweetness which does not chime with experience. Therefore, those who have derived consolation from Mr. Arnold's noble verse may take comfort. Religion, after all, observes Bishop Butler in his tremendous way, is nothing if it is not true. The same may be said of the poetry of consolation.

The pleasure it is lawful to take in the truthfulness of Mr. Arnold's poetry should not be allowed to lead his lovers into the pleasant paths of exaggeration. The Muses dealt him out their gifts with a somewhat niggardly hand. He had to cultivate his Sparta. No one of his admirers can assert that in Arnold

> 'The force of energy is found,
> And the sense rises on the wings of sound.'

He is no builder of the lofty rhyme. This

he was well aware of. But neither had he any ample measure of those 'winged fancies' which wander at will through the pages of Apollo's favourite children. His strange indifference to Shelley, his severity towards Keats, his lively sense of the wantonness of Shakespeare and the Elizabethans, incline us to the belief that he was not quite sensible of the advantages of a fruitful as compared with a barren soil. His own crop took a good deal of raising, and he was perhaps somewhat disposed to regard luxuriant growths with disfavour.

But though severe and restricted, and without either grandeur or fancy, Arnold's poetry is most companionable. It never teases you — there he has the better of Shelley — or surfeits you — there he prevails over Keats. As a poet, we would never dare or wish to class him with either Shelley or Keats, but as a companion to slip in your pocket before starting to spend the day amid

'The cheerful silence of the fells,'

you may search far before you find any-

thing better than either of the two volumes of Mr. Arnold's poems.

His own enjoyment of the open air is made plain in his poetry. It is no borrowed rapture, no mere bookish man's clumsy joy in escaping from his library, but an enjoyment as hearty and honest as Izaak Walton's. He has a quick eye for things, and rests upon them with a quiet satisfaction. No need to give instances; they will occur to all. Sights and sounds alike pleased him well. So obviously genuine, so real, though so quiet, was his pleasure in our English lanes and dells, that it is still difficult to realise that his feet can no longer stir the cowslips or his ear hear the cuckoo's parting cry.

Amidst the melancholy of his verse, we detect deep human enjoyment and an honest human endeavour to do the best he could whilst here below. The best he could do was, in our opinion, his verse, and it is a comfort, amidst the wreckage of life, to believe he made the most of his gift, cultivating it wisely and well, and enriching man's life with some sober, serious, and beautiful poetry. We are, indeed,

glad to notice that there is to be a new edition of Mr. Arnold's poems in one volume. It will, we are afraid, be too stout for the pocket, but most of its contents will be well worth lodgment in the head. This new edition will, we have no doubt whatever, immensely increase the number of men and women who own the charm of Arnold. The times are ripening for his poetry, which is full of foretastes of the morrow. As we read we are not carried back by the reflection, 'so men once 'thought,' but rather forward along the paths, dim and perilous it may be, but still the paths mankind is destined to tread. Truthful, sober, severe, with a capacity for deep, if placid, enjoyment of the pageant of the world, and a quick eye for its varied sights and an eager ear for its delightful sounds, Matthew Arnold is a poet whose limitations we may admit without denying his right. Our passion for him is a loyal passion for a most temperate king. There is an effort on his brow, we must admit it. It would never do to mistake his poetry for what he called the best, and which he was ever urging upon a sluggish

populace. It intellectualises far too much; its method is a known method, not a magical one. But though effort may be on his brow, it is a noble effort and has had a noble result.

'For most men in a brazen prison live,
Where in the sun's hot eye,
With heads bent o'er their toil, they languidly
Their lives to some unmeaning task-work give,
Dreaming of nought beyond their prison wall.
And as, year after year,
Fresh products of their barren labour fall
From their tired hands, and rest
Never yet comes more near,
Gloom settles slowly down over their breast;
And while they try to stem
The waves of mournful thought by which they are prest,
Death in their prison reaches them
Unfreed, having seen nothing, still unblest.'

Or if not a slave he is a madman, sailing where he will on the wild ocean of life.

'And then the tempest strikes him, and between
The lightning bursts is seen
Only a driving wreck.
And the pale master on his spar-strewn deck,
With anguished face and flying hair,
Grasping the rudder hard,
Still bent to make some port he knows not where,
Still standing for some false impossible shore;

And sterner comes the roar
Of sea and wind, and through the deepening gloom
Fainter and fainter wreck and helmsman loom,
And he too disappears and comes no more.'

To be neither a rebel nor a slave is the burden of much of Mr. Arnold's verse — his song we cannot call it. It will be long before men cease to read their Arnold; even the rebel or the slave will occasionally find a moment for so doing, and when he does it may be written of him:

'And then arrives a lull in the hot race
Wherein he doth for ever chase
That flying and illusive shadow Rest.
An air of coolness plays upon his face,
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast,
And then he thinks he knows
The hills where his life rose
And the sea where it goes.'

WILLIAM HAZLITT

For an author to fare better dead than alive is good proof of his literary vivacity and charm. The rare merit of Hazlitt's writing was recognised in his lifetime by good judges, but his fame was obscured by the unpopularity of many of his opinions, and the vemon he was too apt to instil into his personal reminiscences. He was not a safe man to confide in. He had a forked crest which he sometimes lifted. Because they both wrote essays and were fond of the Elizabethans, it became the fashion to link Hazlitt's name with Lamb's. To be compared with the incomparable is hard fortune. Hazlitt suffered by the comparison, and consequently his admirers, usually in those early days men of keen wits and sharp tongues, grew angry, and infused into their just eulogiums too much of Hazlitt's personal bitterness, and too little of his wide literary sympathies.

But this period of obscurity is now over. No really good thing once come into existence and remaining so is ever lost to the world. This is most comfortable doctrine, and true, besides. In the long run the world's taste is infallible. All it requires is time. How easy it is to give it that! Is substantial injustice at this moment done to a single English writer of prose or verse who died prior to the 1st of January, 1801? Is there a single bad author of this same class who is now read? Both questions may be truthfully answered by a joyful shout of, No! This fact ought to make the most unpopular of living authors the sweetest-tempered of men. The sight of your rival clinging to the cob he has purchased and maintains out of the profits of the trashiest of novels should be pleasant owing to the reflection that both rival and cob are trotting to the same pit of oblivion.

But humorous as is the prospect of the coming occultation of personally disagreeable authors, the final establishment of the fame of a dead one is a nobler spectacle.

William Hazlitt had to take a thrashing

from life. He took it standing up like a man, not lying down like a cur; but take it he had to do. He died on September 18, 1830, tired out, discomfited, defeated. Nobody reviewing the facts of his life can say that it was well spent. There is nothing in it of encouragement. He reaped what he sowed, and it proved a sorry harvest. When he lay dying he wanted his mother brought to his side, but she was at a great distance, and eighty-four years of age, and could not come. Carlyle in his old age, grim, worn, and scornful, said once, sorrowfully enough, 'What I 'want is a mother.' It is indeed an excellent relationship.

But though Hazlitt got the worst of it in his personal encounter with the universe, he nevertheless managed to fling down before he died what will suffice to keep his name alive. You cannot kill merit. We are all too busily engaged struggling with dulness, our own and other people's, and with ennui; we are far too much surrounded by would-be wits and abortive thinkers, ever to forget what a weapon against weariness lies to our hand in the works of Hazlitt, who is

as refreshing as cold water, as grateful as shade.

His great charm consists in his hearty reality. Life may be a game, and all its enjoyments counters, but Hazlitt, as we find him in his writings — and there is now no need to look for him anywhere else — played the game and dealt out the counters like a man bent on winning. He cared greatly about many things. His admiration was not extravagant, but his force is great; in fact, one may say of him as he said of John Cavanagh, the famous fives player, 'His service was tremendous.' Indeed, Hazlitt's whole description of Cavanagh's play reminds one of his own literary method:

'His style of play was as remarkable as 'his power of execution. He had no affec- 'tation, no trifling. He did not throw away 'the game to show off an attitude or try an 'experiment. He was a fine, sensible, 'manly player, who did what he could, but 'that was more than anyone else could 'even affect to do. His blows were not 'undecided and ineffectual, lumbering like 'Mr. Wordsworth's epic poetry, nor waver-

'ing like Mr. Coleridge's lyric prose, nor 'short of the mark like Mr. Brougham's 'speeches, nor wide of it like Mr. Can-'ning's wit, nor foul like the *Quarterly*, 'nor *let* balls like the *Edinburgh Review*.'

Wordsworth, Coleridge, Brougham, Canning! was ever a fives player so described before? What splendid reading it makes! but we quote it for the purpose of applying its sense to Hazlitt himself. As Cavanagh played, so Hazlitt wrote.

He is always interesting, and always writes about really interesting things. His talk is of poets and players, of Shakespeare and Kean, of Fielding and Scott, of Burke and Cobbett, of prize fights and Indian jugglers. When he condescends to the abstract, his subjects bring an appetite with them. The Shyness of Scholars, the Fear of Death, the Identity of an Author with his Books, Effeminacy of Character, the Conversation of Lords, On Reading New Books: the very titles make you lick your lips.

Hazlitt may have been an unhappy man, but he was above the vile affectation of pretending to see nothing in life. Had he

not seen Mrs. Siddons, had he not read Rousseau, had he not worshipped Titian in the Louvre?

No English writer better pays the debt of gratitude always owing to great poets, painters, and authors than Hazlitt; but his is a manly, not a maudlin, gratitude. No other writer has such gusto as he. The glowing passage in which he describes Titian's St. Peter Martyr almost recalls the canvas uninjured from the flames which have since destroyed it. We seem to see the landscape background, 'with that cold 'convent spire rising in the distance amidst 'the blue sapphire mountains and the golden 'sky.' His essay on Sir Walter Scott and the *Waverley Novels* is the very best that has ever been written on that magnificent subject.

As a companion at the Feast of Wits commend us to Hazlitt, and as a companion for a fortnight's holiday commend us to the admirable selection recently made from his works, which are numerous — some twenty volumes — by Mr. Ireland, and published at a cheap price by Messrs. F. Warne and Co. The task of selection is usually a

thankless one. It involves of necessity omission and frequently curtailment. It is annoying to look in vain for some favourite passage, and your annoyance prompts the criticism that a really sound judgment would have made room for what you miss. We lodge no complaint against Mr. Ireland. Like a wise man, he has allowed to himself ample space, and he has compiled a volume of 510 closely though well-printed pages, which has only to be read in order to make the reader well acquainted with an author whom not to know is a severe mental deprivation.

Mr. Ireland's book is a library in itself, and a marvellous tribute to the genius of his author. It seems almost incredible that one man should have said so many good things. It is true he does not go very deep as a critic, he does not see into the soul of the matter as Lamb and Coleridge occasionally do — but he holds you very tight — he grasps the subject, he enjoys it himself and makes you do so. Perhaps he does say too many good things. His sparkling sentences follow so quickly one upon another that the reader's appreci-

ation soon becomes a breathless appreciation. There is something almost uncanny in such sustained cleverness. This impression, however, must not be allowed to remain as a final impression. In Hazlitt the reader will find trains of sober thought pursued with deep feeling and melancholy. Turn to the essays, *On Living to One's Self*, *On Going a Journey*, *On the Feeling of Immortality in Youth*, and read them over again. When you have done so you will be indisposed to consider their author as a mere sayer of good things. He was much more than that. One smiles when, on reading the first Lord Lytton's *Thoughts on the Genius of Hazlitt*, the author of *Eugene Aram*, is found declaring that Hazlitt 'had a keen sense of the Beautiful 'and the Subtle; and what is more, he was 'deeply imbued with sympathies for the 'Humane'; but when Lord Lytton proceeds, 'Posterity will do him justice,' we cease to smile, and handling Mr. Ireland's book, observe with deep satisfaction, 'It 'has.'

THE LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB[1]

Four hundred and seventeen letters of Charles Lamb's, some of them never before published, in two well-printed but handy volumes, edited, with notes illustrative, explanatory, and biographical, by Canon Ainger, and supplied with an admirable index, are surely things to be thankful for and to be desired. No doubt the price is prohibitory. They will cost you in cash, these two volumes, full as they are from title-page to colophon with the sweetness and nobility, the mirth and the melancholy of their author's life, touched as every page of them is with traces of a hard fate bravely borne, seven shillings and sixpence.

[1] *Letters of Charles Lamb.* Newly arranged, with additions; and a New Portrait. Edited, with Introduction and Notes, by the Rev. Alfred Ainger, M.A., Canon of Bristol. 2 vols. London, 1888.

None but American millionaires and foolish book-collectors can bear such a strain upon their purses. It is the cab-fare to and from a couple of dull dinner-parties. But Mudie is in our midst, ever ready to supply our very modest intellectual wants at so much a quarter, and ward off the catastrophe so dreaded by all dust-hating housewives, the accumulation of those 'nasty books,' for which indeed but slender accommodation is provided in our upholstered homes. Yet these volumes, however acquired, whether by purchase, and therefore destined to remain by your side ready to be handled whenever the mood seizes you, or borrowed from a library to be returned at the week's end along with the last new novel people are painfully talking about, cannot fail to excite the interest and stir the emotions of all lovers of sound literature and true men.

But first of all, Canon Ainger is to be congratulated on the completion of his task. He told us he was going to edit *Lamb's Works and Letters*, and naturally one believed him; but in this world there is nothing so satisfactory as performance.

To see a good work well planned, well executed, and entirely finished by the same hand that penned, and the same mind that conceived the original scheme, has something about it which is surprisingly gratifying to the soul of man, accustomed as he is to the wreckage of projects and the failure of hopes.

Canon Ainger's edition of *Lamb's Works and Letters* stands complete in six volumes. Were one in search of sentiment, one might perhaps find it in the intimate association existing between the editor and the old church by the side of which Lamb was born, and which he ever loved and accounted peculiarly his own. Elia was born a Templar.

'I was born and passed the first seven 'years of my life in the Temple. Its 'church, its halls, its gardens, its fountain, 'its river, I had almost said — for in those 'young years, what was this king of rivers 'to me but a stream that watered our pleas-'ant places? — these are my oldest recol-'lections.'

Thus begins the celebrated essay on 'The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple.'

As a humble member of that honourable Society, I rejoice that its Reader should be the man who has, as a labour of love and by virtue of qualifications which cannot be questioned, placed upon the library shelf so complete and choice an edition of the works of one whose memory is perhaps the pleasantest thing about the whole place.

So far as these two volumes of letters are concerned the course adopted by the editor has been, if I may make bold to say so, the right one. He has simply edited them carefully and added notes and an index. He has not attempted to tell Lamb's life between times. He has already told the story of that life in a separate volume. I wish the practice could be revived of giving us a man's correspondence all by itself in consecutive volumes, as we have the letters of Horace Walpole, of Burke, of Richardson, of Cowper, and many others. It is astonishing what interesting and varied reading such volumes make. They never tire you. You do not stop to be tired. Something of interest is always occurring. Some reference to a place you

have visited; to a house you have stayed at; to a book you have read; to a man or woman you wish to hear about. As compared with the measured malice of a set biography, where you feel yourself in the iron grasp, not of the man whose life is being professedly written, but of the man (whom naturally you dislike) who has taken upon himself to write the life, these volumes of correspondence have all the ease and grace and truthfulness of nature. There is about as much resemblance between reading them and your ordinary biography, as between a turn on the treadmill and a saunter into Hertfordshire in search of Mackery End. I hope when we get hold of the biographies of Lord Beaconsfield, and Dean Stanley, we shall not find ourselves defrauded of our dues. But it is of the essence of letters that we should have the whole of each. I think it wrong to omit even the merely formal parts. They all hang together. The method employed in the biography of George Eliot was, in my opinion — I can but state it — a vicious method. To serve up letters in solid slabs cut out of longer letters is distressing.

Every letter a man writes is an incriminating document. It tells a tale about him. Let the whole be read or none.

Canon Ainger has adopted the right course. He has indeed omitted a few oaths — on the principle that 'damns have 'had their day.' For my part, I think I should have been disposed to leave them alone.

> 'The rough bur-thistle spreading wide
> Amang the bearded bear,
> I turn'd my weeding-clips aside
> And spared the symbol dear.'

But this is not a question to discuss with a dignitary of the Church. Leaving out the oaths and, it may perhaps be, here and there a passage where the reckless humour of the writer led him to transcend the limits of becoming mirth, and mere notelets, we have in these two volumes Lamb's letters just as they were written, save in an instance or two where the originals have been partially destroyed. The first is to Coleridge, and is dated May 27, 1796; the last is to Mrs. Dyer, and was written on December 22, 1834. Who, I wonder, ever managed to squeeze into a correspondence

of forty years truer humour, madder nonsense, sounder sense, or more tender sympathy! They do not indeed (these letters) prate about first principles, but they contain many things conducive to a good life here below.

The earlier letters strike the more solemn notes. As a young man Lamb was deeply religious, and for a time the appalling tragedy of his life, the death of his mother by his sister's hand, deepened these feelings. His letters to Coleridge in September and October, 1769, might very well appear in the early chapters of a saint's life. They exhibit the rare union of a colossal strength, entire truthfulness, (no single emotion being ever exaggerated,) with the tenderest and most refined feelings. Some of his sentences remind one of Johnson, others of Rousseau. How people reading these letters can ever have the impudence to introduce into the tones of their voices when they are referring to Lamb the faintest suspicion of condescension, as if they were speaking of one weaker than themselves, must always re-

main an unsolved problem of human conceit.

These elevated feelings passed away. He refers to this in a letter written in 1801 to Walter Wilson.

'I have had a time of seriousness, and 'I have known the importance and reality 'of a religious belief. Latterly, I acknowl- 'edge, much of my seriousness has gone 'off, whether from new company or some 'other new associations, but I still retain 'at bottom a conviction of the truth and a 'certainty of the usefulness of religion.'

The fact, I suspect, was that the strain of religious thoughts was proving too great for a brain which had once succumbed to madness. Religion sits very lightly on some minds. She could not have done so on Lamb's. He took refuge in trivialities seriously, and played the fool in order to remain sane.

These letters are of the same material as the *Essays of Elia*. The germs, nay, the very phrases, of the latter are frequently to be found in the former. This does not offend in Lamb's case, though as a rule a good letter ought not forcibly to

remind us of a good essay by the same hand. Admirable as are Thackeray's lately-published letters, the parts I like best are those which remind me least of a *Roundabout Paper*. The author is always apt to steal in, and the author is the very last person you wish to see in a letter. But as you read Lamb's letters you never think of the author: his personality carries you over everything. He manages — I will not say skilfully, for it was the natural result of his delightful character, always to address his letter to his correspondent — to make it a thing which, apart from the correspondent, his habits and idiosyncrasies, could not possibly have existed in the shape it does. One sometimes comes across things called letters, which might have been addressed to anybody. But these things are not letters: they are extracts from journals or circulars, and are usually either offensive or dull.

Lamb's letters are not indeed model letters like Cowper's. Though natural to Lamb, they cannot be called easy. 'Di-'vine chit-chat' is not the epithet to de-

scribe them. His notes are all high. He is sublime, heartrending, excruciatingly funny, outrageously ridiculous, sometimes possibly an inch or two overdrawn. He carries the charm of incongruity and total unexpectedness to the highest pitch imaginable. John Sterling used to chuckle over the sudden way in which you turn up Adam in the following passage from a letter to Bernard Barton:

'DEAR B. B. — You may know my letters by the paper and the folding. For the former I live on scraps obtained in charity from an old friend, whose stationery is a permanent perquisite; for folding I shall do it neatly when I learn to tie my neckcloths. I surprise most of my friends by writing to them on ruled paper, as if I had not got past pot-hooks and hangers. Sealing-wax I have none in my establishment; wafers of the coarsest bran supply its place. When my epistles come to be weighed with Pliny's, however superior to them in Roman delicate irony, judicious reflections, etc., his gilt post will bribe over the judges to him. All the time I was at the E. I. H. I never mended a

'pen. I now cut 'em to the stumps, mar-'ring rather than mending the primitive 'goose-quill. I cannot bear to pay for 'articles I used to get for nothing. When 'Adam laid out his first penny upon non-'pareils at some stall in Mesopotamos, I 'think it went hard with him, reflecting 'upon his old goodly orchard where he had 'so many for nothing.'

There are not many better pastimes for a middle-aged man who does not care for first principles or modern novels than to hunt George Dyer up-and-down Charles Lamb. Lamb created Dyer as surely as did Cervantes Don Quixote, Sterne Toby Shandy, or Charles Dickens Sam Weller. Outside Lamb George Dyer is the deadest of dead authors. Inside Lamb he is one of the quaintest, queerest, most humorously felicitous of living characters. Pursue this sport through Canon Ainger's first volume and you will have added to your gallery of whimsicalities the picture of George Dyer by a master-hand.

Lamb's relations towards Coleridge and Wordsworth are exceedingly interesting. He loved them both as only Lamb could

love his friends. He admired them both immensely as poets. He recognised what he considered their great intellectual superiority over himself. He considered their friendship the crowning glory of his life. For Coleridge his affection reached devotion. The news of his death was a shock he never got over. He would keep repeating to himself, 'Coleridge is dead!' But with what a noble, independent, manly mind did he love his friends! How deep, how shrewd was his insight into their manifold infirmities! His masculine nature and absolute freedom from that curse of literature, coterieship, stand revealed on every page of the history of Lamb's friendships.

On page 327 of Canon Ainger's first volume there is a letter of Lamb's, never before printed, addressed to his friend Manning, which is delightful reading. The editor did not get it in time to put it in the text, so the careless reader might overlook it, lurking as it does amongst the notes. It is too long for quotation, but a morsel must be allowed me:

'I lately received from Wordsworth a

'copy of the second volume, accompanied 'by an acknowledgment of having received 'from me many months since a copy of a 'certain tragedy with excuses for not hav- 'ing made any acknowledgment sooner, it 'being owing to an almost insurmount- 'able aversion from letter-writing. This 'letter I answered in due form and time, 'and enumerated several of the passages 'which had most affected me, adding, un- 'fortunately, that no single piece had moved 'me so forcibly as the *Ancient Mariner*, '*The Mad Mother*, or the *Lines at Tin- 'tern Abbey*. The Post did not sleep a 'moment. I received almost instantane- 'ously a long letter of four sweating pages 'from my Reluctant Letter-Writer, the pur- 'port of which was, he was sorry his second 'volume had not given me more pleasure '(Devil a hint did I give that it had not 'pleased me), and was compelled to wish 'that my range of sensibility was more ex- 'tended, being obliged to believe that I 'should receive large influxes of happiness 'and happy thoughts (I suppose from the '*Lyrical Ballads*). With a deal of stuff 'about a certain union of Tenderness and

'Imagination, which in the sense he used
'Imagination was not the characteristic of
'Shakespeare, but which Milton possessed
'in a degree far exceeding other Poets,
'which union, as the highest species of
'Poetry and chiefly deserving that name
'"he was most proud to aspire to"; then
'illustrating the said union by two quota-
'tions from his own second volume which
'I had been so unfortunate as to miss.'

But my quotation must stop. It has been long enough to prove what I was saying about the independence of Lamb's judgment even of his best friends. No wonder such a man did not like being called 'gentle-hearted' even by S. T. C., to whom he writes:

'In the next edition of the *Anthology*
'(which Phœbus avert, those nine other
'wandering maids also!) please to blot out
'"gentle-hearted," and substitute drunken
'dog, ragged head, seld-shaven, odd-eyed,
'stuttering, or any other epithet which
'truly and properly belongs to the gentle-
'man in question.'

Of downright fun and fooling of the highest intellectual calibre fine examples

abound on all sides. The 'Dick Hopkins' letter ranks very high. Manning had sent Lamb from Cambridge a piece of brawn, and Lamb takes into his head, so teeming with whimsical fancies, to pretend that it had been sent him by an imaginary Dick Hopkins, 'the swearing scullion of Caius,' who 'by industry and agility has thrust 'himself into the important situation (no 'sinecure, believe me) of cook to Trinity 'Hall'; and accordingly he writes the real donor a long letter, singing the praises of this figment of his fancy, and concludes:

'Do me the favour to leave off the busi-'ness which you may be at present upon, 'and go immediately to the kitchens of 'Trinity and Caius and make my most re-'spectful compliments to Mr. Richard 'Hopkins and assure him that his brawn 'is most excellent: and that I am more-'over obliged to him for his innuendo about 'salt water and bran, which I shall not fail 'to improve. I leave it to you whether 'you shall choose to pay him the civility of 'asking him to dinner while you stay in 'Cambridge, or in whatever other way you 'may best like to show your gratitude to

'*my friend.* Richard Hopkins considered 'in many points of view is a very extraor- 'dinary character. Adieu. I hope to see 'you to supper in London soon, where we 'will taste Richard's brawn, and drink his 'health in a cheerful but moderate cup. 'We have not many such men in any rank 'of life as Mr. R. Hopkins. Crisp, the 'barber of St. Mary's, was just such an- 'other. I wonder *he* never sent me any 'little token, some chestnuts or a puff, or 'two pound of hair; just to remember him 'by.'

We have little such elaborate jesting nowadays. I suppose we think it is not worth the trouble. The Tartary letter to Manning and the rheumatism letters to Crabb Robinson are almost distractingly provocative of deep internal laughter. The letter to Cary apologising for the writer's getting drunk in the British Museum has its sad side; but if one may parody the remark, made by 'the young lady of qual- 'ity,' to Dr. Johnson, which he was so fond of getting Boswell to repeat, though it was to the effect that had he (our great moral- ist) been born out of wedlock his genius

would have been his mother's excuse, it may be said that such a letter as Lamb's was ample atonement for his single frailty.

Lamb does not greatly indulge in sarcasm, though nobody could say more thoroughly ill-natured things than he if he chose to do so. George Dawe, the Royal Academician, is roughly used by him. The account he gives of Miss Berger — Benjay he calls her — is not lacking in spleen. But as a rule if Lamb disliked a person he damned him and passed on. He did not stop to elaborate his dislikes, or to toss his hatreds up and down, as he does his loves and humorous fancies. He hated the second Mrs. Godwin with an entire hatred. In a letter written to Manning when in China he says:

'Mrs. Godwin grows every day in dis-'favour with me. I will be buried with 'this inscription over me: "Here lies C. '"L., the woman hater": I mean that 'hated one woman; for the rest God bless 'them! How do you like the Mandarin-'esses? Are you on some little footing 'with any of them?'

Scattered up and down these letters are

to be found golden sentences, criticisms both of life and of books, to rival which one would have far to go. He has not the glitter of Hazlitt — a writer whom it is a shame to depreciate; nor does he ever make the least pretence of aspiring to the chair of Coleridge. He lived all his life through conscious of a great weakness, and therein indeed lay the foundation of the tower of his strength. 'You do not know,' he writes to Godwin, 'how sore and weak 'a brain I have, or you would allow for 'many things in me which you set down 'for whims.' Lamb apologising for himself to Godwin is indeed a thing at which the imagination boggles. But his humility must not blind us to the fact that there are few men from whom we can learn more.

The most striking note of Lamb's literary criticism is its veracity. He is perhaps never mistaken. His judgments are apt to be somewhat too much coloured with his own idiosyncrasy to be what the judicious persons of the period call final and classical, but when did he ever go utterly wrong either in praise or in dispraise? When did he like a book which was not a good book?

When did either the glamour of antiquity or the glare of novelty lead him astray? How free he was from that silly chatter about books now so abundant! When did he ever pronounce wire-drawn twaddle or sickly fancies, simply reeking of their impending dissolution, to be enduring and noble workmanship?

But it must be owned Lamb was not a great reader of new books. That task devolved upon his sister. He preferred Burnet's *History of his Own Times*, to any novel, even to a 'Waverley.'

'Did you ever read,' he wrote to Manning, 'that garrulous, pleasant history? 'He tells his story like an old man past 'political service, bragging to his sons on 'winter evenings of the part he took in pub-'lic transactions, when his "old cap was '"new." Full of scandal, which all true his-'tory is. No palliatives; but all the stark 'wickedness, that actually gives the *momen-'tum* to national actors. Quite the prattle 'of age and outlived importance. Truth 'and sincerity staring out upon you in '*alto relievo*. Himself a party man, he 'makes you a party man. None of the

'cursed, philosophical, Humeian indiffer-
'ence, so cold and unnatural and inhuman.
'None of the cursed Gibbonian fine writing
'so fine, and composite! None of Dr.
'Robertson's periods with three members.
'None of Mr. Roscoe's sage remarks, all so
'apposite and coming in so clever, lest the
'reader should have had the trouble of draw-
'ing an inference.'

On the subject of children's books Lamb held strong opinions, as indeed he was entitled to do. What married pair with their quiver full ever wrote such tales for children as did this old bachelor and his maiden sister?

'I am glad the snuff and Pipos books
'please. *Goody Two Shoes* is almost out
'of print. Mrs. Barbauld's stuff has ban-
'ished all the old classics of the nursery,
'and the shop-man at Newberry's hardly
'deigned to reach them off an old exploded
'corner of a shelf when Mary asked for
'them. Mrs. Barbauld's and Mrs. Trim-
'mer's nonsense lay in piles about. Knowl-
'edge insignificant and vapid as Mrs. Bar-
'bauld's books convey, it seems must come
'to a child in the *shape of knowledge*, and

'his empty noddle must be turned with con-
'ceit of his own powers when he has learnt
'that a horse is an animal, and Billy is bet-
'ter than a horse, and such like — instead
'of that beautiful interest in wild tales which
'made the child a man, while all the time he
'suspected himself to be no bigger than a
'child.'

Canon Ainger's six volumes are not very big. They take up but little room. They demand no great leisure. But they cannot fail to give immense pleasure to generations to come, to purify tastes, to soften hearts, to sweeten discourse.

AUTHORS IN COURT

THERE is always something a little ludicrous about the spectacle of an author in pursuit of his legal remedies. It is hard to say why, but like a sailor on horseback, or a Quaker at the play, it suggests that incongruity which is the soul of things humorous. The courts are of course as much open to authors as to the really deserving members of the community; and, to do the writing fraternity justice, they have seldom shown any indisposition to enter into them — though if they have done so joyfully, it must be attributed to their natural temperament, which (so we read) is easy, rather than to the mirthful character of legal process.

To write a history of the ligitations in which great authors have been engaged would indeed be *renovare dolorem*, and is no intention of mine; though the subject

is not destitute of human interest — indeed, quite the opposite.

Great books have naturally enough, being longer lived, come into court even more frequently than great authors. *Paradise Lost*, *The Whole Duty of Man*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Thomson's *Seasons*, *Rasselas*, all have a legal as well as a literary history. Nay, Holy Writ herself has raised some nice points. The king's exclusive prerogative to print the authorised version has been based by some lawyers on the commercial circumstance that King James paid for it out of his own pocket. Hence, argued they, cunningly enough, it became his, and is now his successor's. Others have contended more strikingly that the right of multiplying copies of the Scriptures necessarily belongs to the king as head of the Church. A few have been found to question the right altogether, and to call it a job. As her present gracious Majesty has been pleased to abandon the prerogative, and has left all her subjects free (though at their own charges) to publish the version of her learned predecessor, the Bible does not now come into court on

its own account. But whilst the prerogative was enforced, the king's printers were frequently to be found seeking injunctions to restrain the vending of the Word of God by (to use Carlyle's language) 'Mr. 'Thomas Teggs and other extraneous per-'sons.' Nor did the judges, on proper proof, hesitate to grant what was sought. It is perhaps interesting to observe that the king never claimed more than the text. It was always open to anybody to publish even King James's version, if he added notes of his own. But how shamefully was this royal indulgence abused! Knavish booksellers, anxious to turn a dishonest penny out of the very Bible, were known to publish Bibles with so-called notes, which upon examination turned out not to be *bonâ-fide* notes at all, but sometimes mere indications of assent with what was stated in the text, and sometimes simple ejaculations. And as people as a rule preferred to be without notes of this character they used to be thoughtfully printed at the very edge of the sheet, so that the scissors of the binder should cut them off and prevent them annoying the reader. But one can fancy

the question, 'What is a *bonâ-fide* note?' exercising the legal mind.

Our great lawyers on the bench have always treated literature in the abstract with the utmost respect. They have in many cases felt that they too, but for the grace of God, might have been authors. Like Charles Lamb's solemn Quaker, 'they 'had been wits in their youth.' Lord Mansfield never forgot that, according to Mr. Pope, he was a lost Ovid. Before ideas in their divine essence the judges have bowed down. 'A literary composition,' it has been said by them, 'so long as it lies dor-'mant in the author's mind, is absolutely 'in his own possession.' Even Mr. Horatio Sparkins, of whose brilliant table-talk this observation reminds us, could not more willingly have recognised an obvious truth.

But they have gone much further than this. Not only is the repose of the dormant idea left undisturbed, but the manuscript to which it, on ceasing to be dormant, has been communicated, is hedged round with divinity. It would be most unfair to the delicacy of the legal mind to

attribute this to the fact, no doubt notorious, that whilst it is easy (after, say, three years in a pleader's chambers) to draw an indictment against a man for stealing paper, it is not easy to do so if he has only stolen the ideas and used his own paper. There are some quibbling observations in the second book of Justinian's *Institutes*, and a few remarks of Lord Coke's which might lead the thoughtless to suppose that in their protection of an author's manuscripts the courts were thinking more of the paper than of the words put upon it; but that this is not so clearly appears from our law as it is administered in the Bankruptcy branch of the High Court.

Suppose a popular novelist were to become a bankrupt — a supposition which, owing to the immense sums these gentlemen are now known to make, is robbed of all painfulness by its impossibility — and his effects were found to consist of the three following items: first, his wearing apparel; second, a copy of *Whitaker's Almanack* for the current year; and third, the manuscript of a complete and hitherto unpublished novel, worth in the Row, let

us say, one thousand pounds. These are the days of cash payments, so we must not state the author's debts at more than fifteen hundred pounds. It would have been difficult for him to owe more without incurring the charge of imprudence. Now, how will the law deal with the effects of this bankrupt? Ever averse to exposing anyone to criminal proceedings, it will return to him his clothing, provided its cash value does not exceed twenty pounds, which, as authors have left off wearing bloom-coloured garments even as they have left off writing *Vicars of Wakefield*, it is not likely to do. This humane rule disposes of item number one. As to *Whitaker's Almanack*, it would probably be found necessary to take the opinion of the court; since, if it be a tool of the author's trade, it will not vest in the official receiver and be divisible amongst the creditors, but, like the first item, will remain the property of the bankrupt — but otherwise, if not such a tool. On a point like this the court would probably wish to hear the evidence of an expert — of some man like Mr. George Augustus Sala, who knows the literary life to the

backbone. This point disposed of, or standing over for argument, there remains the manuscript novel, which, as we have said, would, if sold in the Row, produce a sum not only sufficient to pay the costs of the argument about the *Almanack* and of all parties properly appearing in the bankruptcy, but also, if judiciously handled, a small dividend to the creditors. But here our law steps in with its chivalrous, almost religious respect for ideas, and declares that the manuscript shall not be taken from the bankrupt and published without his consent. In ordinary cases everything a bankrupt has, save the clothes for his back and the tools of his trade, is ruthlessly torn from him. Be it in possession, reversion, or remainder, it all goes. His incomes for life, his reversionary hopes, are knocked down to the speculator. In vulgar phrase, he is 'cleaned out.' But the manuscripts of the bankrupt author, albeit they may be worth thousands, are not recognised as property; they are not yet dedicate to the public. The precious papers, despite all their writer's misfortunes, remain his — his to croon and to dream over,

his to alter and re-transcribe, his to withhold, ay, his to destroy, if he should deem them, either in calm judgment, or in a despairing hour, unhappy in their expression or unworthy of his name.

There is something positively tender in this view. The law may be an ass, but it is also a gentleman.

Of course, in my imaginary case, if the bankrupt were to withhold his consent to publication, his creditors, even though it were held that the *Almanack* was theirs, would get nothing. I can imagine them grumbling, and saying (what will not creditors say?): 'We fed this gentleman whilst 'he was writing this precious manuscript. 'Our joints sustained him, our bread filled 'him, our wine made him merry. Without 'our goods he must have perished. By all 'legal analogies we ought to have a lien 'upon that manuscript. We are wholly 'indifferent to the writer's reputation. It 'may be blasted for all we care. It was 'not as an author but as a customer 'that we supplied his very regular wants. 'It is now our turn to have wants. We 'want to be paid.'

These amusing, though familiar, cries of distress need not disturb our equanimity or interfere with our admiration for the sublime views as to the sanctity of unpublished ideas entertained by the Court sitting in Bankruptcy.

We have thus found, so far as we have gone, the profoundest respect shown by the law both for the dormant ideas and the manuscripts of the author. Let us now push boldly on, and inquire what happens when the author withdraws his interdict, takes the world into his confidence, and publishes his book.

Our old Common Law was clear enough. Subject only to laws or customs about licensing and against profane books and the like, the right of publishing and selling any book belonged exclusively to the author and persons claiming through him. Books were as much the subjects of property-rights as lands in Kent or money in the bank. The term of enjoyment knew no period. Fine fantastic ideas about genius endowing the world and transcending the narrow bounds of property were not countenanced by our Common Law. Bun-

yan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, in the year 1680, belonged to Mr. Ponder: *Paradise Lost*, in the year 1739, was the property of Mr. Jacob Tonson. Mr. Ponder and Mr. Tonson had acquired these works by purchase. Property-rights of this description seem strange to us, even absurd. But that is one of the provoking ways of property-rights. Views vary. Perhaps this time next century it will seem as absurd that Ben Mac Dhui should ever have been private property as it now does that in 1739 Mr. Tonson should have been the owner 'of man's first disobedience and the 'fruit of that forbidden tree.' This is not said with any covered meaning, but is thrown out gloomily with the intention of contributing to the general depreciation of property.

If it be asked how came it about that authors and booksellers allowed themselves to be deprived of valuable and well-assured rights — to be in fact disinherited, without so much as an expostulatory ode or a single epigram — it must be answered, strange as it may sound, it hap-

pened accidentally and through tampering with the Common Law.

Authors are indeed a luckless race. To be deprived of your property by Act of Parliament is a familiar process, calling for no remarks save of an objurgatory character; but to petition Parliament to take away your property — to get up an agitation against yourself, to promote the passage through both Houses of the Act of spoliation, is unusual; so unusual indeed that I make bold to say that none but authors would do such things. That they did these very things is certain. It is also certain that they did not mean to do them. They did not understand the effect of their own Act of Parliament. In exchange for a term of either fourteen or twenty-one years, they gave up not only for themselves, but for all before and after them, the whole of time. Oh! miserable men! No enemy did this; no hungry mob clamoured for cheap books; no owner of copyrights so much as weltered in his gore. The rights were unquestioned: no one found fault with them. The authors accomplished their own ruin. Never,

surely, since the well-nigh incredible folly of our first parents lost us Eden and put us to the necessity of earning our living, was so fine a property — perpetual copyright — bartered away for so paltry an equivalent.

This is how it happened. Before the Revolution of 1688 printing operations were looked after, first by the Court of Star Chamber, which was not always engaged, as the perusal of constitutional history might lead one to believe, in torturing the unlucky, and afterwards by the Stationers' Company. Both these jurisdictions revelled in what is called summary process, which lawyers sometimes describe as *brevi manu*, and suitors as 'short 'shrift.' They hailed before them the Mr. Thomas Teggs of the period, and fined them heavily and confiscated their stolen editions. Authors and their assignees liked this. But then came Dutch William and the glorious Revolution. The press was left free; and authors and their assignees were reduced to the dull level of unlettered persons; that is to say, if their rights were interfered with, they were

compelled to bring an action, of the kind called 'trespass on the case,' and to employ astute counsel to draw pleadings with a pitfall in each paragraph, and also to incur costs; and in most cases, even when they triumphed over their enemy, it was only to find him a pauper from whom it was impossible to recover a penny. Nor had the law power to fine the offender or to confiscate the pirated edition; or if it had this last power, it was not accustomed to exercise it, deeming it unfamiliar and savouring of the Inquisition. Grub Street grew excited. A noise went up 'most 'musical, most melancholy,

'As of cats that wail in chorus.'

It was the Augustan age of literature. Authors were listened to. They petitioned Parliament, and their prayer was heard. In the eighth year of good Queen Anne the first copyright statute was passed which, 'for the encouragement of 'learned men to compose and write useful 'books,' provided that the authors of books already printed who had not transferred their rights, and the booksellers or other

persons who had purchased the copy of any books in order to print or reprint the same, should have the sole right of printing them for a term of twenty-one years from the tenth of April, 1710, and no longer; and that authors of books not then printed, should have the sole right of printing for fourteen years, and no longer. Then followed, what the authors really wanted the Act for, special penalties for infringement. And there was peace in Grub Street for the space of twenty-one years. But at the expiration of this period the fateful question was stirred — what had happened to the old Common Law right in perpetuity? Did it survive this peddling Act, or had it died, ingloriously smothered by a statute? That fine old book — once on every settle — *The Whole Duty of Man*, first raised the point. Its date of publication was 1657, so it had had its term of twenty-one years. That term having expired, what then? The proceedings throw no light upon the vexed question of the book's authorship. Sir Joseph Jekyll was content with the evidence before him that, in 1735 at all

events, *The Whole Duty of Man* was, or would have been but for the statute, the property of one Mr. Eyre. He granted an injunction, thus in effect deciding that the old Common Law had survived the statute. Nor did the defendant appeal, but sat down under the affront, and left *The Whole Duty of Man* alone for the future.

Four years later there came into Lord Hardwicke's court 'silver-tongued Murray,' afterwards Lord Mansfield, then Solicitor-General, and on behalf of Mr. Jacob Tonson moved for an injunction to restrain the publication of an edition of *Paradise Lost.* Tonson's case was, that *Paradise Lost* belonged to him, just as the celebrated ewer by Benvenuto Cellini once belonged to the late Mr. Beresford Hope. He proved his title by divers mesne assignments and other acts in the law, from Mrs. Milton — the poet's third wife, who exhibited such skill in the art of widowhood, surviving her husband as she did for fifty-three years. Lord Hardwicke granted the injunction. It looked well for the Common Law. Thomson's *Seasons* next took

up the wondrous tale. This delightful author, now perhaps better remembered by his charming habit of eating peaches off the wall with both hands in his pockets, than by his great work, had sold the book to Andrew Millar, the bookseller whom Johnson respected because, said he, 'he 'has raised the price of literature.' If so, it must have been but low before, for he only gave Thomson a hundred guineas for 'Summer,' 'Autumn,' and 'Winter,' and some other pieces. The 'Spring' he bought separately, along with the ill-fated tragedy, *Sophonisba*, for one hundred and thirty-seven pounds ten shillings. A knave called Robert Taylor pirated Millar's Thomson's *Seasons;* and on the morrow of All Souls in Michaelmas, in the seventh year of King George the Third, Andrew Millar brought his plea of trespass on the case against Robert Taylor, and gave pledges of prosecution, to wit, John Doe and Richard Roe. The case was recognised to be of great importance, and was argued at becoming length in the King's Bench. Lord Mansfield and Justices Willes and Aston upheld the Common Law. It was,

they declared, unaffected by the statute. Mr. Justice Yates dissented, and in the course of a judgment occupying nearly three hours, gave some of his reasons. It was the first time the court had ever finally differed since Mansfield presided over it. Men felt the matter could not rest there. Nor did it. Millar died, and went to his own place. His executors put up Thomson's *Poems* for sale by public auction, and one Beckett bought them for five hundred and five pounds. When we remember that Millar only gave two hundred and forty-two pounds ten shillings for them in 1729, and had therefore enjoyed more than forty years' exclusive monopoly, we realise not only that Millar had made a good thing out of his brother Scot, but what great interests were at stake. Thomson's *Seasons*, erst Millar's, now became Beckett's; and when one Donaldson of Edinburgh brought out an edition of the poems, it became the duty of Beckett to take proceedings, which he did by filing a bill in the Court of Chancery.[1]

[1] Donaldson was a well-known man in Edinburgh. He was Boswell's first publisher, and on one occasion

These proceedings found their way, as all decent proceedings do, to the House of Lords — farther than which you cannot go, though ever so minded. It was now high time to settle this question, and their lordships accordingly, as was their proud practice in great cases, summoned the judges of the land before their bar, and put to them five carefully-worded questions, all going to the points — what was the old Common Law right, and has it survived the statute? Eleven judges attended, heard the questions, bowed and retired to consider their answers. On the fifteenth of February, 1774, they reappeared, and it being announced that they differed, instead of being locked up without meat, drink, or firing until they agreed, they were requested to deliver their opinions with their reasons, which they straightway proceeded to do. The result may be stated with tolerable accuracy thus: by ten to one they

gave that gentleman a dinner consisting mainly of pig. Johnson's view of his larcenous proceedings is stated in the Life. Thurlow was his counsel in this litigation. Donaldson's Hospital in Edinburgh represents the fortune made by this publisher.

were of opinion that the old Common Law recognised perpetual copyright. By six to five they were of opinion that the statute of Queen Anne had destroyed this right. The House of Lords adopted the opinion of the majority, reversed the decree of the Court below, and thus Thomson's *Seasons* became your *Seasons*, my *Seasons*, anybody's *Seasons*. But by how slender a majority! To make it even more exciting, it was notorious that the most eminent judge on the Bench (Lord Mansfield) agreed with the minority; but owing to the combined circumstances of his having already, in a case practically between the same parties and relating to the same matter, expressed his opinion, and of his being not merely a judge but a peer, he was prevented (by etiquette) from taking any part, either as a judge or as a peer, in the proceedings. Had he not been prevented (by etiquette), who can say what the result might have been?

Here ends the story of how authors and their assignees were disinherited by mistake, and forced to content themselves with

such beggarly terms of enjoyment as a hostile legislature doles out to them.

As the law now stands, they may enjoy their own during the period of the author's life, *plus* seven years, or the period of forty-two years, whichever may chance to prove the longer.

So strangely and so quickly does the law colour men's notions of what is inherently decent, that even authors have forgotten how fearfully they have been abused and how cruelly robbed. Their thoughts are turned in quite other directions. I do not suppose they will care for these old-world memories. Their great minds are tossing on the ocean which pants dumbly-passionate with dreams of royalties. If they could only shame the English-reading population of the United States to pay for their literature, all would be well. Whether they ever will, depends upon themselves. If English authors will publish their books cheap, Brother Sam may, and probably will, pay them a penny a copy, or some such sum. If they will not, he will go on stealing. It is wrong, but he will do it. 'He says,' observes an

American writer, 'that he was born of 'poor but honest parents. *I* say, "Bah!"'[1]

[1] I was wrong, and this very volume is protected by law in the United States of America — but it still remains pleasingly uncertain whether the book-buying public across the water who were willing to buy *Obiter Dicta* for twelve cents will give a dollar for *Res Judicata*.

NATIONALITY

Nothing can well be more offensive than the abrupt asking of questions, unless indeed it be the glib assurance which professes to be able to answer them without a moment's doubt or consideration. It is hard to forgive Sir Robert Peel for having once asked, 'What is a pound?' Cobden's celebrated question, 'What next? And next?' was perhaps less objectionable, being vast and vague, and to employ Sir Thomas Browne's well-known phrase, capable of a wide solution.

But in these disagreeable days we must be content to be disagreeable. We must even accept being so as our province. It seems now recognised that he is the best Parliamentary debater who is most disagreeable. It is not so easy as some people imagine to be disagreeable. The gift requires cultivation. It is easier, no doubt, for some than for others.

What is a nation — socially and politically, and as a unit to be dealt with by practical politicians? It is not a great many things. It is not blood, it is not birth, it is not breeding. A man may have been born at Surat and educated at Lausanne, one of his four great-grandfathers may have been a Dutchman, one of his four great-grandmothers a French refugee, and yet he himself may remain from his cradle in Surat to his grave at Singapore, a true-born Englishman, with all an Englishman's fine contempt for mixed races and struggling nationalities.

Where the English came from is still a matter of controversy, but where they have gone to is writ large over the earth's surface. Yet their nationality has suffered no eclipse. Caviare is not so good in London as in Moscow, but it is caviare all the same. No foreigner needs to ask the nationality of the man who treads on his corns, smiles at his religion, and does not want to know anything about his aspirations.

England has all the notes of a nation. She has a National Church, based upon a

view of history peculiarly her own. She has a National Oath, which, without any undue pride, may be pronounced adequate for ordinary occasions. She has a Constitution, the admiration of the world, and of which a fresh account has to be written every twenty years. She has a History, glorious in individual feats, and splendid in accomplished facts; she has a Literature which makes the poorest of her children, if only he has been taught to read, rich beyond the dreams of avarice. As for the national character, it may be said of an Englishman, what has been truly said of the great English poet Wordsworth — take him at his best and he need own no superior. He cannot always be at his best; and when he is at his worst the world shudders.

But what about Scotland and Ireland? Are they nations? If they are not, it is not because their separate characteristics have been absorbed by John Bullism. Scotland and Ireland are no more England than Holland or Belgium. It may be doubted whether, if the three countries had never been politically united, their

existing unlikeness would have been any greater than it is. It is a most accentuated unlikeness. Scotland has her own prevailing religion. Mr. Arnold recognised this when he observed, in that manner of his which did not always give pleasure, that Dr. Chalmers reminded him of a Scotch thistle valorously trying to look as much like the rose of Sharon as possible. This distorted view of Mr. Arnold's at all events recognises a fact. Then there is Scotch law. If there is one legal proposition which John Bull — poor attorney-ridden John Bull — has grasped for himself, it is that a promise made without a monetary or otherwise valuable consideration, is in its legal aspect a thing of nought, which may be safely disregarded. Bull's views about the necessity of writing and sixpenny stamps are vague, but he is quite sound and certain about promises going for nothing unless something passed between the parties. Thus, if an Englishman, moved, let us say, by the death of his father, says hastily to a maiden aunt who has made the last days of his progenitor easy, 'I will give 'you fifty pounds a year,' and then repents

him of his promise, he is under no legal obligation to make it good. If he is a gentleman he will send her a ten-pound note at Christmas and a fat goose at Michaelmas, and the matter drops as being but the babble of the sick-room. But in Scotland the maiden aunt, provided she can prove her promise, can secure her annuity and live merrily in Peebles for the rest of a voluptuous life. Here is a difference indeed!

Then, Scotland has a history of her own. The late Dr. Hill Burton wrote it in nine comfortable volumes. She has a thousand traditions, foreign connections, feelings to which the English breast must always remain an absolute stranger. Scottish fields are different from English fields; her farms, roads, walls, buildings, flowers, are different; her schools, universities, churches, household ways, songs, foods, drinks, are all as different as may be. Boswell's Johnson, Lockhart's Scott! What a host of dissimilarities, what an Iliad of unlikenesses, do the two names of Johnson and Scott call up from the vasty deep of national differences!

One great note of a nation is possessed to the full by Scotland. I mean the power of blending into one state of national feeling all those who call what is contained within her geographical boundaries by the sacred name of 'Home.' The Lowlander from Dumfries is more at home at Inverness than in York. Why is this? Because Scotland is a nation. The great Smollett, who challenges Dickens for the foremost place amongst British comic writers, had no Celtic blood in his veins. He was neither a Papist nor a Jacobite, yet how did his Scottish blood boil whilst listening in London to the cowardly exultations of the cockneys over the brutalities that followed the English victory at Colloden! and how bitterly — almost savagely — did he contrast that cowardly exultation with the depression and alarm that had prevailed in London when but a little while before the Scotch had reached Derby.

What patriotic feeling breathes through Smollett's noble lines, *The Tears of Caledonia*, and with what delightful enthusiasm, with what affectionate admiration, does Sir Walter Scott tell us how the

last stanza came to be written! 'He '(Smollett) accordingly read them the 'first sketch of the *Tears of Scotland* 'consisting only of six stanzas, and on 'their remarking that the termination of 'the poem, being too strongly expressed, 'might give offence to persons whose 'political opinions were different, he sat 'down without reply, and with an air of 'great indignation, subjoined the conclud-'ing stanza:

> '"While the warm blood bedews my veins,
> And unimpaired remembrance reigns,
> Resentment of my country's fate
> Within my filial breast shall beat.
> Yes, spite of thine insulting foe,
> My sympathising verse shall flow,
> Mourn, hopeless Caledonia, mourn,
> Thy banished peace, thy laurels torn."'

In the same sense is the story told by Mr. R. L. Stevenson, how, when the famous Celtic regiment, the Black Watch, which then drew its recruits from the now unpeopled glens of Ross-shire and Sutherland, returned to Scotland after years of foreign service, veterans leaped out of the boats and kissed the shore of Galloway.

The notes of Irish nationality have been, by conquest and ill-usage, driven deeper in. Her laws were taken from her, and her religion brutally proscribed. In the great matter of national education she has not been allowed her natural and proper development. Her children have been driven abroad to foreign seminaries to get the religious education Protestant England denied them at home. Her nationality has thus been checked and mutilated, but that it exists in spirit and in fact can hardly be questioned by any impartial traveller. Englishmen have many gifts, but one gift they have not — that of making Scotsmen and Irishmen forget their native land.

The attitude of some Englishmen towards Scotch and Irish national feelings requires correction. The Scotsman's feelings are laughed at. The Irishman's insulted. So far as the laughter is concerned, it must be admitted that it is good-humoured. Burns, Scott, and Carlyle, Scotch moors and Scotch whisky, the royal game of golf, all have mollified and beautified English feelings. In candour, too, it must be admitted that

Scotsmen are not conciliatory. They do not meet people half-way. I do not think the laughter does much harm. Insults are different. . . .

Mr. Arnold, in a now scarce pamphlet published in 1859, on the Italian Question, with the motto prefixed, '*Sed nondum est finis*,' makes the following interesting observations: —

'Let an Englishman or a Frenchman, 'who respectively represent the two great-'est nationalities of modern Europe, sin-'cerely ask himself what it is that makes 'him take pride in his nationality, what it 'is which would make it intolerable to his 'feelings to pass, or to see any part of his 'country pass, under foreign dominion. 'He will find that it is the sense of self-'esteem generated by knowing the figure 'which his nation makes in history; by 'considering the achievements of his nation 'in war, government, arts, literature, or in-'dustry. It is the sense that his people, 'which has done such great things, merits 'to exist in freedom and dignity, and to en-'joy the luxury of self-respect.'

This is admirable, but not, nor does it

pretend to be, exhaustive. The love of country is something a little more than mere *amour propre*. You may love your mother, and wish to make a home for her, even though she never dwelt in kings' palaces, and is clad in rags. The children of misery and misfortune are not all illegitimate. Sometimes you may discern amongst them high hope and pious endeavour. There may be, indeed, there is, a Niobe amongst the nations, but tears are not always of despair.

'The luxury of self-respect.' It is a wise phrase. To make Ireland and Irishmen self-respectful is the task of statesmen.

THE REFORMATION

Long ago an eminent Professor of International Law, at the University of Cambridge, lecturing his class, spoke somewhat disparagingly of the Reformation as compared with the Renaissance, and regretted there was no adequate history of the glorious events called by the latter name. So keenly indeed did the Professor feel this gap in his library, that he proceeded to say that inconvenient as it had been to him to lecture at Cambridge that afternoon, still if what he had said should induce any member of the class to write a history of the Renaissance worthy to be mentioned with the masterpiece of Gibbon, he (the Professor) would never again think it right to refer to the inconvenience he had personally been put to in the matter.

It must be twenty years since these words were uttered. The class to whom

they were addressed is scattered far and wide, even as the household referred to in the touching poem of Mrs. Hemans. No one of them has written a history of the Renaissance. It is now well-nigh certain no one of them ever will. Looking back over those twenty years it seems a pity it was never attempted. As Owen Meredith sweetly sings —

> 'And it all seems now in the waste of life
> Such a very little thing.'

But it has remained undone. Regrets are vain.

For my part, I will make bold to say that the Professor was all wrong. Professors do not stand where they did. They have been blown upon. The ugliest gap in an Englishman's library is in the shelf which ought to contain, but does not, a history of the Reformation of Religion in his own country. It is a subject made for an Englishman's hand. At present it is but (to employ some old-fashioned words) a hotch-potch, a gallimaufry, a confused mingle-mangle of divers things jumbled or put together. Puritan and Papist, Anglican

and Erastian, pull out what they choose, and drop whatever they do not like with a grimace of humorous disgust. What faces the early Tractarians used to pull over Bishop Jewel! How Dr. Maitland delighted in exhibiting the boundless vulgarity of the Puritan party! Lord Macaulay had only a paragraph or two to spare for the Reformation; but as we note amongst the contents of his first chapter the following heads: 'The Reformation and its Effects,' 'Origin of the Church of England,' 'Her Peculiar Character,' we do not need to be further reminded of the views of that arch-Erastian.

It is time someone put a stop to this 'help yourself' procedure. What is needed to do this is a long, luminous, leisurely history, written by somebody who, though wholly engrossed by his subject, is yet absolutely indifferent to it.

The great want at present is of common knowledge; common, that is, to all parties. The Catholic tells his story, which is much the most interesting one, sure of his audience. The Protestant falls back upon his Fox, and relights the fires of Smithfield

with entire self-satisfaction. The Erastian flourishes his Acts of Parliament in the face of the Anglican, who burrows like a cony in the rolls of Convocation. Each is familiar with one set of facts, and shrinks nervously from the honour of an introduction to a totally new set. We are not going to change our old '*mumpsimus*' for anybody's new '*sumpsimus*.' But we must some day, and we shall when this new history gets itself written.

The subject cannot be said to lack charm. Border lands, marches, passes are always romantic. No bagman can cross the Tweed without emotion. The wanderer on the Malvern Hills soon learns to turn his eyes from the dull eastward plain to where they can be feasted on the dim outlines of wild Wales. Border periods of history have something of the same charm. How the old thing ceased to be? How the new thing became what it is? How the old colours faded, and the old learning disappeared, and the Church of Edward the Confessor, and St. Thomas of Canterbury, and William of Wykeham, became the Church of George the Third, Archbishop

Tait, and Dean Stanley? There is surely a tale to be told. Something must have happened at the Reformation. Somebody was dispossessed. The common people no longer heard 'the blessed mutter of the 'mass,' nor saw 'God made and eaten all 'day long.' Ancient services ceased, old customs were disregarded, familiar words began to go out of fashion. The Reformation meant something. On these points the Catholics entertain no kind of doubt. That they suffered ejectment they tearfully admit. Nor, to do them justice, have they ever acquiesced in the wrong they allege was then done them, or exhibited the faintest admiration for the intruder.

> 'Have ye beheld the young God of the Seas,
> My dispossessor? Have ye seen his face?
> Have ye beheld his chariot foam'd along
> By noble wing'd creatures he hath made?
> I saw him on the calmed waters scud,
> With such a glow of beauty in his eyes
> That it enforced me to bid sad farewell
> To all my empire.'

This has never been the attitude or the language of the Roman Church towards the Anglican. 'Canterbury has gone its

'way, and York is gone, and Durham is 'gone, and Winchester is gone. It was 'sore to part with them.' So spoke Dr. Newman on a memorable occasion. His distress would have been no greater had the venerable buildings to which he alluded been in the possession of the Baptists.

But against this view must be set the one represented by the somewhat boisterous Church of Englandism of Dean Hook, who ever maintained that all the Church did at the Reformation was to wash her dirty face, and that consequently she underwent only an external and not a corporate change during the process.

There are thousands of pious souls to whom the question, What happened at the Reformation? is of supreme importance; and yet there is no history of the period written by a 'kinless loon,' whose own personal indifference to Church Authority shall be as great as his passion for facts, his love of adventures and biography, and his taste for theology.

In the meantime, and pending the production of the immortal work, it is pleasant to notice that annually the historian's task

is being made easier. Books are being published, and old manuscripts edited and printed, which will greatly assist the good man, and enable him to write his book by his own fireside. The Catholics have been very active of late years. They have shaken off their shyness and reserve, and however reluctant they still may be to allow their creeds to be overhauled and their rites curtailed by strangers, they have at least come with their histories in their hands and invited criticism. The labours of Father Morris of the Society of Jesus, and of the late Father Knox of the London Oratory, greatly lighten and adorn the path of the student who loves to be told what happened long ago, not in order that he may know how to cast his vote at the next election, but simply because it so happened, and for no other reason whatsoever.

Father Knox's name has just been brought before the world, not, it is to be hoped, for the last time, by the publication of a small book, partly his, but chiefly the work of the Rev. T. E. Bridgett, entitled *The True Story of the Catholic Hierarchy deposed by Queen Elizabeth, with Fuller*

Memoirs of its Two Last Survivors (Burns and Oates).

The book was much wanted. When Queen Mary died, on the 17th of November, 1558, the dioceses of Oxford, Salisbury, Bangor, Gloucester, and Hereford were vacant. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Reginald Pole, died a few hours after his royal relative; and the Bishops of Rochester, Norwich, Chichester, and Bristol did not long survive her. It thus happened that at the opening of 1559 there were only sixteen bishops on the bench. What became of them? The book I have just mentioned answers this deeply interesting question.

One of them, Oglethorpe of Carlisle, was induced to crown the Queen, which service was, however, performed according to the Roman ceremonial, and included the Unction, the Pontifical Mass, and the Communion; but when the oath prescribed by the Act of Supremacy was tendered to the bishops, they all, with one exception, Kitchen of Llandaff, declined to take it, and their depositions followed in due course, though at different dates,

during the year 1559. They were, in plain English, turned out, and their places given to others.

A whole hierarchy turned a-begging like this might have been a very startling thing — but it does not seem to have been so. There was no Ambrose amongst the bishops. The mob showed no disposition to rescue Bonner from the Marshalsea. The Queen called them 'a set of lazy scamps.' This was hard measure. The reverend authors of the book before me call them 'confessors,' which they certainly were. But there is something disappointing and non-apostolic about them. They none of them came to violent ends. What did happen to them?

The classical passage recording their fortunes occurs in Lord Burghley's *Execution of Justice in England*, which appeared in 1583. His lordship in a good-tempered vein runs through the list of the deposed bishops one by one, and says in substance, and in a style not unlike Lord Russell's, that the only hardship put upon them was their removal 'from their ecclesiastical 'offices, which they would not exercise

'according to law.' For the rest, they were 'for a great time retained in bishops' houses 'in very civil and courteous manner, with-'out charge to themselves or their friends, 'until the time the Pope began, by his Bulls 'and messages, to offer trouble to the realm 'by stirring of rebellion;' then Burghley admits, some of them were removed to more quiet places, but still without being 'called to any capital or bloody question.'

In this view historians have pretty generally acquiesced. Camden speaks of Tunstall of Durham dying at Lambeth 'in 'free custody'—a happy phrase which may be recommended to those of Her Majesty's subjects in Ireland who find themselves in prison under a statute of Edward III., not for doing anything, but for refusing to say they will not do it again. Even that most erudite and delightful of English Catholics, Charles Butler, who is one of the pleasantest memories of Lincoln's Inn, made but little of the sufferings of these bishops, whilst some Protestant writers have thought it quite amazing they were not all burnt as heretics. 'There 'were no retaliatory burnings,' says Canon

Perry regretfully. But this surely is carrying Anglican assurance to an extraordinary pitch. What were they to be burnt for? You are burnt for heresy. That is right enough. No one would complain of that. But who in the year 1559 would have been bold enough to declare that the Archbishop of York was a heretic for refusing an oath prescribed by an Act of the Queen of the same year? Why, even now, after three centuries and a quarter of possession, I suppose Lord Selborne would hesitate before burning the Archbishop of Westminster as a heretic. Hanging is a different matter. It is very easy to get hung — but to be burnt requires a combination of circumstances not always forthcoming. Canon Perry should have remembered this.

These deposed bishops were neither burnt nor hung. The aged Tunstall of Durham, who had played a very shabby part in Henry's time, died, where he was bound to die, in his bed, very shortly after his deposition; so also did the Bishops of Lichfield and Coventry, St. David's, Carlisle, and Winchester. Dr. Scott of Ches-

ter, after four years in the Fleet prison, managed to escape to Belgium, where he died in 1565. Dr. Pate of Worcester, who was a Council of Trent man, spent three years in the Tower, and then contrived to slip away unobserved. Dr. Poole of Peterborough was never in prison at all, but was allowed to live in retirement in the neighbourhood of London till his death in 1568. Bishop Bonner was kept a close prisoner in the Marshalsea till his death in 1569. He was not popular in London. As he had burnt about one hundred and twenty persons, this need not surprise us. Bishop Bourne of Bath and Wells was lodged in the Tower from June, 1560, to the autumn of 1563, when the plague breaking out, he was quartered on the new Bishop of Lincoln, who had to provide him with bed and board till May, 1566, after which date the ex-bishop was allowed to be at large till his death in 1569. The Bishop of Exeter was kept in the Tower for three years. What subsequently became of him is not known. He is supposed to have lived in the country. Bishop Thirlby of Ely, after three years in the Tower, lived for eleven years

with Archbishop Parker, uncomfortably enough, without confession or mass. Then he died. It is not to be supposed that Parker ever told his prisoner that they both belonged to the same Church. Dr. Heath, the Archbishop of York, survived his deprivation twenty years, three only of which were spent in prison. He was a man of more mark than most of his brethren, and had defended the Papal supremacy with power and dignity in his place in Parliament. The Queen, who had a liking for him, was very anxious to secure his presence at some of the new offices, but he would never go, summing up his objections thus:—'Whatever is contrary to the 'Catholic faith is heresy, whatever is con-'trary to Unity is schism.' On getting out of the Tower, Dr. Heath, who had a private estate, lived upon it till his death. Dr. Watson of Lincoln was the most learned and the worst treated of the deposed bishops. He was in the Tower and the Marshalsea, with short intervals, from 1559 to 1577, when he was handed over to the custody of the Bishop of Winchester, who passed him on, after eighteen months, to

his brother of Rochester, from whose charge he was removed to join other prisoners in Wisbeach Castle, where very queer things happened. Watson died at Wisbeach in 1584. There was now but one bishop left, the by no means heroic Goldwell of St. Asaph's, who in June, 1559, proceeded in disguise to the sea-coast, and crossed over to the Continent without being recognised. He continued to live abroad for the rest of his days, which ended on the 3rd of April, 1585. With him the ancient hierarchy ceased to exist. That, at least, is the assertion of the reverend authors of the book referred to. There are those who maintain the contrary.

SAINTE-BEUVE

The vivacious, the in fact far too vivacious, Abbé Galiani, writing to Madame d'Épinay, observes with unwonted seriousness: 'Je remarque que le caractère dominant des Français perce toujours. Ils sont causeurs, raisonneurs, badins par essence; un mauvais tableau enfante une bonne brochure; ainsi, vous parlerez mieux des arts que vous n'en ferez jamais. Il se trouvera, au bout du compte, dans quelques siècles, que vous aurez le mieux raisonné, le mieux discuté ce que toutes les autres nations auront fait de mieux.' To affect to foretell the final balance of an account which is not to be closed for centuries demands either celestial assurance or Neapolitan impudence: but, regarded as a guess, the Abbé's was a shrewd one. The *post-mortem* may prove him wrong, but can hardly prove him absurdly wrong.

We owe much to the French — enlightenment, pleasure, variety, surprise; they have helped us in a great many ways: amongst others, to play an occasional game of hide-and-seek with Puritanism, a distraction in which there is no manner of harm; unless, indeed, the demure damsel were to turn huffy, and after we had hidden ourselves, refuse to find us again. Then, indeed — to use a colloquial expression — there would be the devil to pay.

But nowhere have the French been so helpful, in nothing else has the change from the native to the foreign article been so delightful, as in this very matter of criticism upon which the Abbé Galiani had seized more than a hundred years ago. Mr. David Stott has lately published two small volumes of translations from the writings of Sainte-Beuve, the famous critic, who so long has been accepted as the type of all that is excellent in French criticism. French turned into English is always a woful spectacle — the pale, smileless corpse of what was once rare and radiant; but it is a thousand times better to read Sainte-Beuve or any other good foreign author

in English than not to read him at all. Everybody has not time to emulate the poet Rowe, who learned Spanish in order to qualify himself, as he fondly thought, for a snug berth at Madrid, only to be told by his scholarly patron that now he could read *Don Quixote* in the original.

We hope these two volumes may be widely read, as they deserve to be, and that they may set their readers thinking what it is that makes Sainte-Beuve so famous a critic and so delightful a writer. His volumes are very numerous. 'All Balzac's 'novels occupy a shelf,' says Browning's Bishop; Sainte-Beuve's criticisms take up quite as much room. The *Causeries du Lundi* and the *Nouveaux Lundis* fill some twenty-eight tomes. *À priori*, one would be disposed to mutter, 'This is too much.' Can any man turned fifty truthfully declare that he wishes De Quincey had left thirty volumes behind him instead of fifteen? Great is De Quincey, but so elaborate are his movements, so tremendous his literary contortions, that when you have done with him you feel it would be cruelty to keep him stretched upon the rack of his own

style for a moment longer. Sainte-Beuve is as easy as may be. Never before or since has there been an author so well content with his subject, whatever it might chance to be; so willing to be bound within its confines, and not to travel beyond it. In this excellent 'stay-at-home' quality, he reminds the English reader more of Addison than of any of our later critics and essayists. These latter are too anxious to please, far too disposed to believe that, apart from themselves and their flashing wits, their readers can have no possible interest in the subject they have in hand. They are ever seeking to adorn their theme instead of exploring it. They are always prancing, seldom willing to take a brisk constitutional along an honest, turnpike road. Even so admirable, so sensible a writer as Mr. Lowell is apt to worry us with his Elizabethan profusion of imagery, epithet, and wit. 'Something too much of 'this,' we cry out before we are half-way through. William Hazlitt, again, is really too witty. It is uncanny. Sainte-Beuve never teases his readers this way. You often catch yourself wondering, so matter-

of-fact is his narrative, why it is you are interested. The dates of the births and deaths of his authors, the facts as to their parentage and education, are placed before you with stern simplicity, and without a single one of those quips and cranks which Carlyle ('God rest his soul! — he was a 'merry man') scattered with full hands over his explosive pages. But yet if you are interested, as for the most part you are, what a triumph for sobriety and good sense! A noisy author is as bad as a barrel-organ; a quiet one is as refreshing as a long pause in a foolish sermon.

Sainte-Beuve covered an enormous range in his criticism; he took the Whole Literature as his province. It is an amusing trait of many living authors whose odd craze it is to take themselves and what they are fond of calling their 'work' — by which, if you please, they mean their rhymes and stories — very seriously indeed, to believe that critics exist for the purpose of calling attention to them — these living solemnities — and pointing out their varied excellences, or promise of excellence, to an eager book-buying public. To detect in some infant's

squall the rich futurity of a George Eliot, to predict a glorious career for Gus Hoskins — this it is to be a true critic. For my part, I think a critic better occupied, though he be destitute of the genius of Lamb or Coleridge, in calling attention to the real greatnesses or shortcomings of dead authors than in dictating to his neighbours what they ought to think about living ones. If you teach me or help me to think aright about Milton, you can leave me to deal with *The Light of Asia* on my own account. Addison was better employed expounding the beauties of *Paradise Lost* to an unappreciative age than when he was puffing Philips and belittling Pope, or even than he would have been had he puffed Pope and belittled Philips.

Sainte-Beuve was certainly happier snuffing the 'parfums du passée' than when ranging amongst the celebrities of his own day. His admiration for Victor Hugo, which so notoriously grew cool, is supposed to have been by no means remotely connected with an admiration for Victor Hugo's wife. These things cannot

be helped, but if you confine yourself to the past they cannot happen.

The method pursued by this distinguished critic during the years he was producing his weekly *Causerie*, was to shut himself up alone with his selected author — that is, with his author's writings, letters, and cognate works — for five days in the week. This was his period of immersion, of saturation. On the sixth day he wrote his criticism. On the seventh he did no manner of work. The following day the *Causerie* appeared, and its author shut himself up again with another set of books to produce another criticism. This was a workmanlike method. Sainte-Beuve had a genuine zeal to be a good workman in his own trade — the true instinct of the craftsman, always honoured in France, not so honoured as it deserves to be in England.

Sainte-Beuve's most careless reader cannot fail to observe his contentment with his subject, his restraint, and his good sense — all workmanlike qualities: but a more careful study of his writings fully warrants his title to the possession of other

qualities it would be rash to rank higher, but which, here in England, we are accustomed to reward with more lavish praise — namely, insight, sympathy, and feeling.

To begin with, he was endlessly curious about people, without being in the least bit a gossip or a tattler. His interest never fails him, yet never leads him astray. His skill in collecting the salient facts and in emphasising the important ones is marvellous. How unerring was his instinct in these matters the English reader is best able to judge by his handling of English authors, so diverse and so difficult as Cowper, Gibbon, and Chesterfield. He never so much as stumbles. He understands Olney as well as Lausanne, Lady Austen and Mrs. Unwin as well as Madame Neckar or the Hampshire Militia. One feels sure that he could have written a better paper on John Bunyan than Macaulay did, a wiser on John Wesley than anybody has ever done.

Next to his curiosity must be ranked his sympathy, a sympathy all the more contagious because so quietly expressed, and

never purporting to be based on intellectual accord. He handles mankind tenderly though firmly. His interest in them is not merely scientific — his methods are scientific, but his heart is human. Read his three papers on Cowper over again, and you will agree with me. How thoroughly he appreciates the charm of Cowper's happy hours — his pleasant humour — his scholar-like fancies — his witty verse! No clumsy jesting about old women and balls of worsted. It is the mixture of insight with sympathy that is so peculiarly delightful.

Sainte-Beuve's feeling is displayed doubtless in many ways, but to me it is always most apparent when he is upholding modesty and grace and wisdom against their loud-mouthed opposites. When he is doing this, his words seem to quiver with emotion — the critic almost becomes the preacher. I gladly take an example from one of the volumes already referred to. It occurs at the close of a paper on Camille Desmoulins, of whom Sainte-Beuve does his best to speak kindly, but the reaction comes — powerful, overwhelming, sweeping all before it:

'What a longing we feel after reading 'these pages, encrusted with mire and 'blood — pages which are the living image 'of the disorder in the souls and morals of 'those times! What a need we experience 'of taking up some wise book, where com- 'mon-sense predominates, and in which 'the good language is but the reflection 'of a delicate and honest soul, reared in 'habits of honour and virtue! We ex- 'claim: Oh! for the style of honest men '— of men who have revered everything 'worthy of respect; whose innate feelings 'have ever been governed by the princi- 'ples of good taste! Oh! for the pol- 'ished, pure, and moderate writers! Oh! 'for Nicole's Essays, for D'Aguesseau 'writing the Life of his Father. Oh! 'Vauvenargues! Oh! Pellisson!'

I have quoted from one volume; let me now quote from the other. I will take a passage from the paper on Madame de Souza: —

'In stirring times, in moments of inco- 'herent and confused imagination like the 'present, it is natural to make for the most 'important point, to busy one's self with

'the general working, and everywhere, even 'in literature, to strike boldly, aim high, 'and shout through trumpets and speaking-'tubes. The modest graces will perhaps 'come back after a while, and come with an 'expression appropriate to their new sur-'roundings. I would fain believe it; but 'while hoping for the best, I feel sure that 'it will not be to-morrow that their senti-'ments and their speech will once more 'prevail.'

But I must conclude with a sentence from Sainte-Beuve's own pen. Of Joubert he says: 'Il a une manière qui fait qu'il ne 'dit rien, absolument rien comme un autre. 'Cela est sensible dans les lettres qu'il écrit, 'et ne laisse pas de fatiguer à la longue.' Of such a judgment, one can only scribble in the margin, 'How true!' Sainte-Beuve was always willing to write like another man. Joubert was not. And yet, strange paradox! there will be always more men able to write in the strained style of Joubert than in the natural style of Sainte-Beuve. It is easier to be odd, intense, over-wise, enigmatic, than to be sensible, simple, and to see the plain truth about things.

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